S. MSTISLAVSKY

# ROOK—HERALD *OF* SPRING

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PUBLISHING HOUSE
Moscow

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A STORY ABOUT N. BAUMAN

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PUBLISHING HOUSE
Moscow 1955

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# PART ONE

## *Chapter I*

## IN THE NIGHT

That night a blizzard raged over the frontier. The prickly snow-flakes whipped their faces savagely; there was no escape, no shelter; the snow swirled and thrashed out from all directions; the frost burned more painfully than fire.

It had been wonderful on the narrow path in the thicket. The crisp snow, blue in the darkness, had crunched softly underfoot as they had carefully picked a single track; the fluffy snow-flakes had lain motionless on the antler-like branches. And only far overhead, among the dark crowns of the tall pines, had the wind been howling.

But as soon as they came out into the open, the blizzard turned its full fury on them, shutting out earth and sky.

The guide stopped and turned round, revealing his bearded face. The suit-cases, strapped together by a broad belt and slung over his shoulder, one at his chest and the other on his back, looked like two fantastic white humps. Through the snowstorm the man resembled some fabulous creature as he stood there in his thick sheepskin coat and high snow-covered fur cap.

He called out but his words were unintelligible. Perhaps the sentences sounded broken because he had to shout every word separately, besides straining his voice to make it heard above the howling wind.

"Frontier now—soldiers—German—Russian. You—what I do—like this. I bend," the giant stooped his shoulders, scattering the snow that had piled on his back and the suit-cases, "you bend—I run—you run—I lie down—you lie down. Understand? Whatever happens, watch—me."

He shook himself as he shouted, and the man following him—he was wearing a felt hat and light overcoat unsuitable for the severe Russian winter—nodded to show that he had heard. He had not heard everything, but that was of no consequence. It was obvious that he had to do as the guide did, or perish.

He listened with his head lowered, his sleeve shielding his face, his eyes almost shut; here was an opportunity to rest for a moment, while they stood still and the guide shouted almost into his ear.

The voice suddenly broke off. The man half-opened his eyes, but found the guide was no longer in sight.

He took a step forward and immediately stumbled waist-deep into the snow; the road seemed to have sagged under him. Was he going in the wrong direction?

He was. The wind was now whistling in his left ear; before, it had been blowing in his face. That meant he had taken the wrong direction. Or had the wind changed?

He could not remain standing there, for every second was taking the guide farther and farther away. He moved haphazardly to the right; the snow was deeper there. He turned again, feeling for firm ground with his foot, and completely lost his bearings.

Then he hallooed, straining so hard that he felt as though blood would spurt from his eyes. But it was the

effort alone that convinced him he had really shouted out; he could not hear his own voice.

Precious minutes slipped by. He could no longer feel the icy pricks on his numbed face. He battled against the wind, grimly pressing forward over the virgin snow. He caught the direction of the wind and trudged on as before with it blowing in his face. The main thing now was not to go round and round in a circle, following his own tracks, after the blizzard had swept them away.

He began to count his steps because that helped him to keep a grip on himself, to think only of what he should be thinking: the trek through the blizzard straight ahead to the break in the frontier, lying somewhere close by. It must be quite near. At any moment he might see rising before him the striped post and, flattened against it, the black heavy-beaked German eagle. Or the double-headed Russian one.

After every ten steps the man would stop to get his breath and to listen. Then silently and rapidly the clinging snow would pile round him up to the waist, the shoulders. If he lingered he would get buried alive.

Through the blizzard he suddenly saw quite near a steady yellow light. He lunged towards it without wasting a second, forcing the snow aside with his knees.

The light blinked and receded some two, four, six, ten steps. It appeared to be stationary, yet it was moving farther and farther into the snow-bound night. But the man already understood, and proceeded more confidently at a quicker pace. Once more he sank up to his waist in the snow. That was when he tripped into a ditch. He took a steep step up out of the ditch and felt a paved road under his feet. It was a highway. On the wayside he made out the clear-cut outlines of a small chapel with an icon lamp burning dimly behind a pane.

There was not a soul about. The blizzard raged. And here, in a desolate field stood a chapel. It was like a fairy-tale.

The man smiled and went up to the chapel.

The icon-lamp was burning on the lee-side. Here, in the shelter of the high marble wall, it was more peaceful than in the open countryside, though the snow was piled up high against the deep window through which the icon was visible.

The man pressed himself against the window. That way he scarcely felt the wind. There was the broad cornice above, and the carved columns on each side, making the shelter complete. He could wait here for the blizzard to slacken. It was all the same now, as, in any case, he had no idea where the frontier was. It certainly did look as though the blizzard was quietening down.

But he did not have to wait. A huge, double-humped figure emerged from the gloom. It was Karl, the guide.

Neither was surprised. Indeed, the two men nodded as though their meeting here was quite natural, as though, when they had separated in the field, they had agreed to meet at the chapel.

"We'll be home soon," the guide said, putting his lips close to the man's ear.

The man lifted his eyebrows in amazement.

"How about the frontier?"

Karl swung back his arm. As he smiled a cloud of steam appeared just below the icicles drooping from his moustache.

"I've passed it. Passed it without noticing," his companion thought to himself.

Karl went round the corner to the chapel and stepped into a snow-drift in the deep roadside ditch. Again the wind whistled in the left ear. But this time the man in the felt hat, which was miraculously clear of snow, was not at all surprised. Two paces ahead of him was the

broad back of the guide, trudging through the snowstorm. Whatever happened now, the main thing had been done. The frontier was behind.

. . . . . .

"Look out! Here's a wattle fence!"

They climbed over it. They were obviously in a vegetable garden, because there were ridges of earth on either side of the narrow path. At the end of it a well-built log house loomed in the darkness. The wind had abated, the sky had cleared, and there was a moon.

Karl halted.

"Don't lag behind," he whispered. "The dog the owner keeps is a savage beast."

The moment he said it, the dog began to bark furiously somewhere quite near them.

"There it is. Marvo's its name. Follow close behind me."

His companion laughed.

"It's all right. We'll be friends in a minute. Marvo!" he called, clapping his hands in their thin unsuitable gloves.

## *Chapter II*

## THE HIDING PLACE

They entered the house from the yard. The door was opened immediately, at the first light tap, as though they were expected. The room was clean and tidy; the owners were evidently well-to-do. The windows were hung with thick felt curtains and not a ray of light stole outdoors from the paraffin lamp burning brightly under its flower-festooned glass shade. The stove was hot, and there was a fragrant smell, something like caraway-seeds or mint. The mistress of the house was an old woman with a dark kerchief tied over her thinning grey hair; she was busy at the stove. It was warm and cosy.

The important thing now was to rub the blood back into the white numbed cheeks.

Karl went out, leaving his companion rubbing his cheeks hard with both hands over a basin of snow. The host, a tall, kind-looking old man, stood beside him with a towel over his shoulders. The towel was embroidered with long-tailed red cocks.

"It doesn't take long to freeze to death in this weather," he said, shaking his head compassionately. A note of reproach seemed to sound in his voice. "It's a long time since I saw a blizzard like this. And you'll excuse my saying so, but your clothes are not what this weather needs. You're from warm parts, aren't you?"

The host was a Russian. He spoke like a townsman. Instead of answering, the guest asked:

"Did you live in the city before settling here?"

"I've been about. Lived in the city, too. Here, take this towel. Just look at yourself. The colour's back in your face as true as I'm alive. You must have a powerful intercessor in heaven. Who is your saint, if I may make so bold? What is your Christian name?"

"Christian name?" the guest looked up from the basin, smiling all over his wet ruddy face. "Panteleimon."

"A holy man he was," the old man grunted. "A saint and a healer. That's why he helped you. A rubdown with snow comes first in a case like this. And now we'll rub in some grease. By morning you won't even remember the frost."

"Are you sure no one will disturb us during the night?"

"Disturb you?" the host smiled. "No fear. I've got everything fixed up. They'll never find you here no matter how they search."

"You think so? All the same, is there a chance of anyone searching?"

"No one, except God." The old man winked humor-

ously. "We have some spiteful people in the village, but that's only natural. I've been reported many a time already. I'm hiding fugitives, they said. Well, the frontier guards do sometimes look in. But, as I say, I've got everything fixed up. You needn't worry, Panteleimon ... what is your patronymic?"

"Kuzmich." The guest threw the towel back to the old man. "Can you feed us?"

"Certainly!" the host hurried to reply. "Boiled chicken? Or an omelette? Fried eggs? The wife will have it ready for you in a minute. Five eggs, say? They will be fifty kopeks each."

The guest gave a low whistle. That was the price for a first-class restaurant, not a lonely frontier village. But the house was something special and so was the host. A risk costs money. If a stranger like this, who had crossed the frontier illegally without a passport, were to be caught in his house he would need a pretty penny to buy his way out of trouble. And then there was always the possibility that he would be imprisoned and have no chance to do any bribing.

Yes, a risk costs money.

"All right!" the guest nodded. "I'll have all five. Some bread, too. Milk—no, I think I'd prefer some hot tea."

The old woman turned round from the stove with an affectionate expression on her face. The host showed his teeth in a broad smile; God had sent him a generous guest. When a man was open-handed like that he was as good as any wealthy man.

"Won't you please sit down? The wife will have everything ready. Only, you'll have to pardon me, Panteleimon Kuzmich, but payment in advance is our rule. Ten rubles for the lodging. For the omelette, that will be two fifty. For the bread..."

He did not finish. Someone had begun to pound angrily on the gates.

"Strangers."

The door was flung open. Karl came in frowning. He said a few words to the old man from the threshold and went out again, shutting the door firmly behind him.

"Frontier guards," the old man whispered, but he was very calm, so calm indeed that the thought crossed the guest's mind that his host would betray him.

The old woman moved a bench up to the stove.

"Climb up after me, Panteleimon Kuzmich," the host said, taking Panteleimon by the elbow.

He swung his heavy body easily on to the stove couch. Panteleimon followed. The old man deftly ran his fingers down a strip of wall behind the couch. The wall moved aside under the pressure of his hand, exposing a black opening that looked as if it were a man-hole leading to the cellar.

"In you go. The drop isn't anything to speak of."

"Where've you put the suit-cases?" Panteleimon asked, lowering himself into the hole. "I don't want to lose them."

"They're in there, below. Hurry! Hear the rattle of their rifles. Karl's already bringing the guards in. Oh God! Thy will be done! You must have left a trail somewhere."

He gave Panteleimon a shove, hurriedly moved back the board that slid easily in its groove, and jumped down to the floor. He was just in time. There was an imperious, search-party knock on the door.

. . . . . .

After a long and tormenting silence, Panteleimon heard a rustling sound overhead. A muffled voice called out and a moment later the old man slid down into the musty cellar, carefully feeling his way with his smart white felt boots.

"Sorry I had to keep you here before you got any tea. I couldn't help it. The soldiers searched the whole

village. They had been notified that some notorious political trouble-maker, God knows who, had crossed the frontier tonight. And the orders were to find him. There's a big reward out, they say."

The old man looked at the tall Russian, his grey faded eyes clearly mocking him, so much so that the thought of treachery again flashed across Panteleimon's mind.

The old man moved a ladder that had been leaning in a corner and stood it against the man-hole.

"You can have your supper now. But I'm afraid you'll have to spend the night in the cellar. It's a bit stuffy, true, but it's safe."

## *Chapter III*

## ON THE ROAD

They left the old man's house at dawn.

This time the guide was Dorren, a friend of Karl's, but the route was the same—across the vegetable garden, the field and the woods. They travelled lightly. The suitcases had been sent earlier in a sleigh with Karl, who had to buy the tickets at the station. Police agents were watching all frontier stations and even the sidings, and it was dangerous for a stranger to show himself at the ticket-window. He had to be careful.

The Russian asked about his host. Everything about the man, he said, his eyes and manner or speaking, plainly indicated that he was hob-nobbing with the police.

Dorren confirmed this.

"You're right. That's why Karl took you there. He charges a lot, but it's safe. The old man pays the police and they don't bother smugglers."

"But I'm not a smuggler. He guessed who I am; he hinted quite clearly that I was the man the frontier guards were after. I understand why he does not give away smugglers. But political offenders?"

"Give away?" Dorren laughed, bending closer to the Russian as though he wanted to make sure his ears had not deceived him. "If he did that where do you think he could hide from *us*? He knows he's a dead man as soon as he does that, even if he manages to hide behind seven locks. But I don't see why he would want to play foul with anyone. He wants money and nothing else."

They were following a lonely forest path. Dorren caught hold of a dry branch with his right hand. It cracked in his powerful fingers.

"There are a lot of things I had wanted to ask you about, Comrade Vasili. I know you can't say much. But I'll just ask one question. Have we got to endure this life much longer?"

The Russian knit his brows.

"Until we have mustered our forces. Doing away with the tsar is no joke. Besides, we have to shake off the rule of the landlords and capitalists, otherwise we'll only find the chains tighter around us. That has often happened with other peoples. We mustn't let it happen to us as well. Therefore, before striking, we have to muster our forces."

Dorren sighed loudly and cast a glance over the trees felled by the wind and the tall, motionless pines.

"All the land here, the fields, forests, even the sky—that's the way it strikes me—belong to the barons. And do you know what German barons are like? They regard people as cattle, swine, manure. You know when a peasant, even when he's neither a serf nor a farm-hand, goes to see a baron, a landlord, he has to kiss his hand!" Dorren angrily snapped the branch in two over his knee and threw the pieces far into the snow. "No. We cannot endure it any longer! We'll revolt. We've got two hundred thousand farm-hands alone; that's enough men to burn down all the barons in our land. We'll revolt! And if we haven't the weapons we'll smash them down with sticks."

The Russian laughed merrily.

"I agree that a stick's as good a weapon as any, especially in strong hands like yours. But all the same, Dorren, you must wait, because if you act alone you'll be crushed—and that will only make it harder for the people."

"In Russia—I read or heard, I don't remember which—there are a hundred and sixty nationalities," Dorren muttered, tearing another branch from the nearest tree. "If we wait until all are ready..."

"I'm not saying—all. I say as many as are needed for a blow. We're rallying the people—that's the work we're doing now."

"I know, I know," Dorren said quickly in a loud voice. "I've read the leaflets your Party's printing. *The Spark Will Kindle a Flame.** That's true. Only it's hard to have to wait. Every fist is clenched. And please tell the right people that they mustn't wait long. The last hour is the longest of all."

## *Chapter IV*

## THE INVISIBLE MAN

The siding to which Dorren brought the Russian was dirty and deserted; just an ordinary out-of-the-way station where only the slowest trains stopped. Dorren went on ahead. They had arranged that he would buy a ticket to Vilnius and that Karl would buy one to Moscow. That precaution was necessary in case the police picked up the trail, in which event Comrade Vasili would have to get off somewhere on the way, perhaps more than once, and change to another train. The ticket to Moscow would save him from going into any railway station. Vasili had to

* The motto of the *Iskra*, the first all-Russian illegal Marxist newspaper, founded by V. I. Lenin in 1900.—*Ed.*

wait near the station and he climbed on to the rickety, ice-covered wooden platform only after the bell had sounded twice and the train had puffed in ten minutes behind time.

Karl carried the suit-cases into the nearest carriage. Vasili quickly followed, while Dorren remained near the station building to watch. There was not even a policeman on the platform; only the railway workers, and his attention was immediately arrested by a thick-set man in a padded coat and official-looking cap with a dark velvet band, the sort of cap usually worn by Ministry of Public Education officials. The man had big feet and a large mouth, a drooping moustache and a swollen nose. There was nothing extraordinary about him, but Dorren remarked how his narrow eyes stealthily moved along the carriages, the way mice search about. Karl jumped down from the carriage steps and kneaded his shoulder as he walked up to Dorren—those suit-cases had made their weight felt, after all.

"The dog's on the scent," Dorren said, nodding at the "official."

Karl nodded, too.

The "official" was undoubtedly a police spy. And he was watching the carriage that Comrade Vasili had entered, watching to see if he would come out. The man edged closer and closer to the steps. He already held the hand-rail.

"We must warn Comrade Vasili," Dorren whispered. "Perhaps it'd be better for him to get off. That dog won't touch him here. He won't dare. But on the train..."

The bell had already rung and the guard had blown his whistle; the couplings and buffers clanged and the train pulled out, with the police agent hanging on to the hand-rail. He was in no hurry to enter the carriage; he continued watching the long line of carriages to see if anyone would jump off, while the train was still mov-

ing slowly. But no one did so. The train jerked forward and put on speed, a cold, piercing wind whistled along the carriages. The police spy pushed the door of the carriage with his shoulder and climbed in.

Karl and Dorren watched the train disappearing. They felt they had not fulfilled their instructions properly. They had been firmly told to see the man off safely. He was important and had two suit-cases full of literature with him. That was a lot to carry about!

Everything had gone off smoothly—buying the tickets, boarding the train. And now this. Where could the spy have come from? They should have warned Comrade Vasili, anyway.

But Comrade Vasili did not need the warning. He had spotted the spy himself. While boarding the train he had seen him sneaking out of the station building. Vasili was waiting now in the corridor, and he went into the compartment where Karl had left the suit-cases only when the spy finally entered the carriage.

Like the entire carriage, the compartment was full of schoolboys. Vasili thought a bit. Why, of course! Yesterday was January 6, the last day of the New Year holidays, and the boys were returning to school in the city.

They were crowded together by the window, looking at the snow-covered countryside which spread out before them as soon as the train left the siding. Vasili had hardly set foot on the threshold when they all turned their heads round and chorused:

"Occupied!"

Nevertheless he entered. There followed on his heels from the corridor a number of other boys who trooped in as reinforcements to the schoolboys who had already stated their claim to the compartment.

"You've been told the compartment's occupied!" yelled one of them, a vivacious lad with a shock of red

hair, stretching out a hand as though he intended seizing Vasili by the sleeve.

"Never mind," Vasili nodded good-naturedly. He raised himself on his toes and pushed the suit-cases further back on the luggage shelf. "I shan't occupy a seat."

That interested the boys.

"How do you mean?"

"Here's how," Vasili laughed. "It's a secret of mine. I sit down..."

He indeed sat down on the dark, hard, dirty seat and stretched out his legs nonchalantly.

"...and suddenly—I say a word, clap my hands..."

He clapped his hands.

"...and presto, I'm gone."

"I know, you're a conjuror!" the red-headed boy cried in delight. "Then you must know a lot of other tricks?"

"I do," Vasili confirmed. "For instance, I can read people's minds."

He fixed his eyes on a thin boy with fair hair, standing with his back to his talkative friend, and shook his head reproachfully.

"Aren't you ashamed of what you're thinking now, young man? I must say..."

The boy flushed furiously.

More and more boys trooped in from the corridor, packing the compartment.

"What?" the red-haired boy asked eagerly.

"Don't tell them! Please, don't!" the fair-haired boy cried, and even put his hand imploringly over his heart. He was on the verge of tears.

Vasili nodded reassuringly.

"I shan't. I shan't say anything if you don't want me to. I'll try it on someone else."

He looked round, but the boys sprang away from him, hiding their heads. Only the red-haired lad held his ground.

"I say, you're a marvel!" he exclaimed enthusiastically.

The square-built, heavy man in the cap with the velvet band, whom Vasili had seen at the station, slipped past the open door of the compartment. His tread was strangely light. The red-haired boy followed him with his eyes.

"Can you guess who that man is?"

"Of course. That's easy!" Vasili shrugged his shoulders carelessly. He stepped on the threshold and watched the man stopping near the door of the lavatory. "He's a school-inspector."

He almost shouted the last word. And the boys clearly saw the stranger's broad shoulders jerk in fright under the padded coat.

"An inspector..." the red-haired boy whispered, stepping to the back of the compartment. His pupils had dilated and darkened. He exchanged glances with the boys nearest to him, and Vasili saw the same terrified, angry expression on all the boys' faces.

## *Chapter V*

## YET ANOTHER SCHOOLBOY

Vasili returned to his seat. Now no one shouted: "Occupied!"

"Did you all see it?" the red-haired boy asked, looking at his friends. "Did you? He actually shuddered. That means he admitted it."

"Quite right!" the others confirmed.

Vasili smiled to himself. He knew what he was doing. But now he purposely assumed an innocent look as though he did not understand what was wrong.

"What's all the rumpus about? What if he is an inspector? Why do you say 'he admitted it'? Is it a crime to be an inspector?"

"Yes, yes!" the red-haired boy cried indignantly, and the boys crowding round him instantly backed him up.

"Of course, it's a crime! You've probably never been to school or you wouldn't ask that."

"An inspector's even worse than a teacher!"

"Even worse than the headmaster, because the headmaster rarely leaves his study, but the inspector is always poking his nose into everything."

Well, that depends on the type of headmaster," a round-faced boy with rosy cheeks chimed in. "Ours, on the contrary, is eternally. . ."

"Wait, chaps," the red-haired boy called for silence. "We've got to think up something. Now that an inspector has fallen into our hands we've got to play a trick on him. That's definite!"

"Two tricks," Vasili said indifferently. "You first and then I will. I've already thought up my trick."

"Then let's have it," the fair-haired boy pleaded. "You've probably got a very good one. Why should you do it yourself? What difference is it to you if he's an inspector? You've never been to school."

"I certainly have!" Vasili gave a drawn-out whistle. "And you should have seen me cramming! The Bible, Greek, and Latin, and. . ."

"Prepositions with the accusative?" someone piped from the back.

And Vasili instantly responded:

*Ante, apud, ad, adversus,*
*Circum, circa, citra, cis,*
*Erga, contra, inter, extra,*
*Infra, intra, juxta, ob. . .*

He drew a long breath. The schoolboys listened in mute admiration.

*Penes, pone, post, praeter,*
*Prope, propter, per, secundum. . .*

The rumbling of the carriage drowned the words. But it was obvious that this man was their friend! He had the whole of Khodobay's Latin Grammar at his finger-tips...

Just then the door from the platform at the end of the carriage slammed, and a voice boomed officially:

"Yo-ur ti-ckets, please."

"The ticket-inspector!"

The boys began turning out their pockets. Railway tickets somehow always managed to get lost. And if your pocket had a hole in it the ticket was sure to fall through. Meanwhile the ticket-inspector's official voice could already be heard in the next compartment:

"Your tickets, gentlemen."

Vasili crooked his finger mysteriously at the boy with the red hair. The boy bent over and Vasili whispered:

"Listen, Hawk-Eyes. If you take the path to the left of our cave, you'll find the den of the pale-face dog. But do you think you can get close without his seeing you?"

"When a Comanche takes the war-path," the boy said quickly, straightening up proudly, "the despicable enemy sees him only the instant the tomahawk splits his skull."

"Go then," Vasili nodded. "And when the ticket-inspector gets to him see to what station he's bought a ticket.

The boy drew his head into his shoulders and slipped out of the compartment. The ticket-inspector, in railway cap and thin, shabby civilian coat, was already on the threshold, punching cardboard tickets, at the compartment door.

"Vilnius... Vilnius... Vilnius..."

. . . . . .

The red-haired boy returned almost as soon as the ticket-inspector left the carriage. He was excited, even

pale. He made a sign for the boys round Vasili to move away, and whispered in his ear:

"He's not going anywhere."

"What was that you said?" Vasili asked, sincerely astonished. "The train is going to..."

"The train is, but he's not. I mean you can't count that going!" the boy exclaimed loudly, obviously indignant at Vasili's slowness to catch on. "He just sat there without a ticket. He showed the ticket-inspector..."

Vasili stopped him with a movement of his hand.

"A little book, a little book in red binding. It has a photograph and a stamp..."

The boy's eyes again expressed infinite respect.

"You've guessed again—without looking."

Vasili laughed and put an arm round the boy's shoulder.

"So you say—nowhere? If a person hasn't a ticket you can't count that going? You're right. I can't forgive myself for not seeing it right away. He's going with us to Vilnius—I'm going to tell you his secret."

"And you—are you going to Vilnius, too?"

"Yes."

"To the circus?" squeaked a small dark-skinned boy as he squeezed his way forward. He was the boy who had shouted about prepositions with the accusative.

"Shut up, numskull," the red-haired boy frowned angrily.

He looked sideways at Vasili. It was clear that for some reason he thought Vasili would be offended. But Vasili showed no sign of displeasure. He clapped the red-haired boy on the shoulder.

"You'd better get your war council together, chief. We'll be in Vilnius before long. You have to think up something before that. In the meantime, I'll listen to the way you make war on inspectors..."

## *Chapter VI*

## A REAL ADVENTURE

"We could tell you," the red-haired boy said pensively. "We make war on the inspector, the headmaster and teachers every day, you know, with never an hour's break. But if you've been to school you ought to know all that yourself. It's the same everywhere."

"And we never get anywhere," the fair-haired boy sighed sadly. "Nothing changes, whatever we do."

"What do you do?" Vasili asked.

"Different things," the boys rejoined. "But we'd rather hear something about yourself, about your school days."

"About myself?" Vasili said, looking thoughtful for a minute. "I don't count."

"Why?" The boys watched him expectantly.

"Because I fought my teachers in a different way. Naturally, we had the same difficulties as you. But you, too, have exceptions—not so few either, I should say." He smiled. "Well, I used to think, think hard, why things are the way they are."

The boys were now huddled in a perfectly still circle, shoulder pressed closely to shoulder.

"Well, why?" one of them asked in a hardly audible whisper.

"Because that is the way our whole life is," Vasili said. "That is the way our life is now arranged. Have you read or has anyone told you how the peasants live, how they are held in bondage by the landlords, by the merchants? And do you know about the way the worker slaves for the factory-owner? We had a tannery in our town in the street where I used to live. When I was a boy I saw the workers go hungry, I saw them ill, their arms covered with ulcers because they had to work in damp premises and with lime for sixteen hours a day. That kind of work needs rubber gloves but the owner never

supplied them. They were expensive—three rubles a pair. A human life was cheaper to the owner. It did not mean anything to him! Naturally the workers themselves couldn't buy any gloves, because their daily earnings amounted to not more than thirty or forty kopeks. And, you know, each of them had a family, children."

Vasili paused.

It was quiet in the compartment. Only the wheels kept up their dull knocking.

"That is how it is not only with tannery workers. All workers live like that! I've met workers who by the time they reached the age of 20 hadn't a single tooth left in their mouths because they had to work in fumes that ate away skin and bones. I've seen type-setters whose lungs had been poisoned by lead dust, and they coughed up blood. In short, I've seen things, and what they're doing to you at school is just child's play. But everything that goes on in schools, in factories, and in villages is caused by one and the same evil."

"What evil?" asked the red-haired boy, thrusting his hands deep into the belt round his blouse.

"Injustice. Inequality. The fact that the rich rule the world and force all the others to work for them. Everything in life is arranged to suit the rich. And over everyone who is not rich there is an overseer who works for the rich, and it's the same in factories and in villages, everywhere. . ."

"That's true!" the red-haired boy said, taking his hands out of his belt and waving them excitedly. "That's true. We had a chap in our class. Malafeyev's his name and his father owns a factory. He always used to get top marks. He's living in St. Petersburg now with his father."

"And they never used to punish him—even when the whole class was punished. The teacher would always say, 'I'm sure Malafeyev is not capable of doing such a ruffian's trick.' "

"Wait!" the red-haired boy interrupted Vasili. "I want to ask you something. Did you see all that for yourself? Or did someone explain it to you?"

"No," Vasili smiled very tenderly. "I didn't see it all myself. You see, I read a book. Chernyshevsky's* *What Is To Be Done?* It tells you how to live honestly."

"*What Is To Be Done?*" the red-haired repeated.

The title was taken up by the boys in the corridor, who were crowding round the compartment, and they whispered to one another:

*WHAT IS TO BE DONE?*

"Well, when we read the book (I read it with my closest friend) and later many other books (Chernyshevsky's was the best), we decided we would live the way the book says we should: honestly. We were then in the seventh form..."

"What did you do?" the red-haired boy cried, his excitement mounting.

Vasili did not reply at once.

"We ... left school."

The boy shuddered.

"You mean you left on your own?"

The fair-haired boy's lips began to tremble.

"But can you do without education?" he asked very quietly.

"Of course, you can't. Ever since then I've continued studying by myself. But they're teaching the wrong things in school, you know."

"You can't go to the university if you don't finish school."

All the boys nodded.

"But I'm not advising you to leave," Vasili smiled. "I was only telling you about myself. My friend and I decided we would serve the people."

* Nikolai Chernyshevsky (1828-1889), the great Russian revolutionary-democrat, materialist philosopher, critic, and writer.—*Ed.*

"It isn't good to be uneducated, either," the fair-haired boy muttered. "You left and what are you now? A conjuror!"

"Yes, a conjuror," Vasili agreed.

But no one even smiled.

"Vilnius!" a loud voice sang out in the corridor, and the crowd of schoolboys scattered like a flock of frightened sparrows. They had to get their things together.

"We've got plenty of time!" the red-haired boy cried. "We'll be held up at the signal yet."

But the carriage was already alive with the anxious bustle that usually precedes a journey's end. The boys struggled into their coats, put on mittens and gloves, rolled up pillows, and strapped them round. In the next compartment an old woman's voice, choking with anxiety, could be heard as she counted her luggage for the tenth time:

"... nine ... ten ... eleven ... Where's the twelfth? Where's the twelfth? You can see yourself that one is missing. Oh, Lord, where could it have got to!"

"I'm sure you've made a mistake," a man's voice rumbled in reply. "It couldn't just disappear with everyone looking on? And we didn't leave the compartment."

She started to count again with a sob in her voice:

"... nine ... ten ..."

Vasili took down his suit-cases. The boys followed his movements soberly. Possibly it was the newness of the suit-cases that made the fair-haired boy remember the promised trick.

He pushed one of the suit-cases with his foot. It did not move. The boy pushed harder. No, it wouldn't move! And here was this tall man taking them down as though they were pillows of down. He couldn't be that strong. He did not look it. He probably had a special way of gripping. But if that was the case, then...

"What about the trick? You promised..." the boy said, his unfinished thought giving him the courage to speak.

"If you'll wait a minute," Vasili nodded, picking up the suit-cases.

"Hey chaps, he's going to show us a trick!" the fair-haired boy yelled.

The boys ran after Vasili, crowding out of the carriage all together. The "inspector," adjusting the cap on his head, was two steps ahead of them, gravely leaving the carriage with heavy steps. He walked a few paces up the platform as soon as he got off, let Vasili and the schoolboys by, and slowly followed them.

"The exit's on the left," the red-haired boy said.

But Vasili continued walking along the side of the train. The boys trooped after him. And the inspector moved leisurely in the same direction.

Vasili looked round.

"Are you going to play a trick on the inspector?" the red-haired boy asked in an undertone.

"I am!" Vasili cried merrily. "We're going to work a surprise on him. Now listen to me. All of you stare at him."

The boys turned their heads. The inspector looked away confusedly from the fifteen pairs of eyes daringly glued to him, and stopped.

He stopped. That was all. Nothing else happened—neither with him nor with anyone else. It was all the same as a second ago: the porters were scurrying to and fro with the luggage, the arrivals were being kissed by those who had come to meet them, a pickpocket was being hauled off by the ear to the police station, and soldiers were saluting a purple-nosed general with a limp and wearing a grey overcoat with red lapels.

Nothing had happened, everything was going on as usual. Nothing happened to the inspector or to anyone else—nothing!

The boy with the red hair turned round indignantly, and froze to the ground in stupefaction. The tall traveller with the suit-cases had vanished.

"Where?"

The boys made a quick search. There was not a trace of him. He just wasn't anywhere. The platform was long. And if the man had been running or walking along it, he would have been easily distinguishable. Only a thief could have climbed under the carriage with those suitcases. He could not have gone into the carriage. He had not had time—only a second or two had passed since they last saw him. Well, it might have been a minute, but certainly not more. At the steps of the carriage there was a crowd of people. Passengers were still coming out of the train and others entering it. But then he had no ticket. They had seen him give it to the ticket-collector. It had been a ticket to Vilnius, they had all seen that, and he could not go on without a ticket.

"Let's make a search!" the fair-haired boy shouted.

The boys scattered all over the platform. Some went to the ticket-office, others to the buffet, and a third group ran alongside the train, peering under the carriages.

Several minutes later they all returned and gathered in a circle round the red-haired boy.

"He isn't anywhere!"

"A quick one! We only looked away for a second and he simply evaporated!"

"Look—the inspector!"

Indeed, the "inspector," puffing after a fast run, came up to them. He looked bewildered. His former gravity was completely gone. His cap had slipped over one ear and, in general, he no longer resembled a school-inspector. He stopped in front of the fair-haired boy.

"Where's that man with the suit-cases who was with you?" he asked hoarsely. His voice trembled and did not sound like a school-inspector's.

The fair-haired boy was about to answer, when the boy with the red hair stopped him. Frowning, he took a step forward, pulled his cap down over his forehead, and thrust his hands deep into the pockets of his grey uniform overcoat.

"He's having tea in the buffet," he said abruptly with a meaning wink at his friends. "That is, if he hasn't yet finished. A lady in a white fur hat with a thick veil met him."

"Did you say a lady in a veil?" the inspector asked, an eager, happy light coming into his eyes. "Where did she meet him? I didn't see her."

"She was standing there," the red-haired boy pointed to the door of the first-class buffet. "I noticed her immediately because I thought she was wearing a mask—her veil was so thick. He came up to her, she lifted her veil and they went in together."

The inspector did not stop to hear any more. He walked briskly to the buffet. The boys watched him silently. The boy with the red hair contemptuously pushed the fair-haired boy with his shoulder.

"And as for you, you're a nice one, you are. You almost let the cat out of the bag. You could see at once the man's a spy. He's trying to catch him."

"You think he's . . . like Dubrovsky, or like those who killed the tsar?" the round-faced boy asked, lowering his eyes.

"Shut up!" the red-haired boy hissed. "You know what you can get for such words. . ."

"Let's go away from here," the fair-haired boy hurried his friends. "He'll see that the man's not in the buffet and know immediately that Vasya lied to him. We'll all be taken to prison then."

"You're a coward and a dunce," Vasya said, curling his lips in disgust. "How can he know whether the man was there or not? And even if... How is he going to prove I told him anything? We'll all say he's lying and that we've never seen him before. There are fifteen of us here—I'd like to see anyone out-argue us!"

"Vasya's right, he can't prove anything."

"And we mustn't go away," Vasya continued. "I still think the man's in the train. He couldn't have gone anywhere else. And that chap in the cap will, I'm sure, again try to follow him. We mustn't let him."

The fair-haired boy shook his head with an apprehensive glance at the station building.

"That's easy to say! I hardly think you'd want to fight him!"

"I shall!" Vasya stamped his foot. "If I have to. Because I, too, have thought up a trick. Listen!"

The boys formed a close circle round him and, making sure that no one except his friends could hear him, he whispered:

"If he starts poking his head into the carriages, I'll shout 'Stop thief!'—and all of you rush to him, surround him and make as much noise as you can. Volodya, take my wallet, just in case. I'll say he stole my money."

"And who's going to believe that! He's probably got a card to show he's from the police. He'll prove it."

"While he's doing that the train will pull out. The second bell's already gone. There—that's the third. Watch out for him."

But there was no sign of the inspector. The boys looked intently at the moving carriage windows to catch a glimpse of the young, laughing face, the clear eyes and the beard.

But Vasili did not show himself. He was lying on the third luggage shelf, close to the wall, and could be seen only from the top bunk. His suit-cases, plastered

with dirty labels, that had not been on them before Vilnius, were standing with their edges to the window. Not even the sharpest-eyed ticket-inspector would now recognize them as those the "inspector" had secretly photographed on the platform at Vilnius station.

The second ticket had proved useful. Without it he would have been unable to board the train; the check at the entrance had been strict. But now he could sleep peacefully till the train reached the White-Stone City, as native Moscovites proudly call Moscow.

## *Chapter VII*

## THE BEAR IN A SARAFAN*

Conversation among passengers in a Moscow suburban train was always something rather special; no matter what the talk or argument was about, every few words someone would certainly say with pride:

"Now, in Moscow we...".

No matter how fierce the argument, everyone would nod and smile and quickly make friends; they are, after all, our own folk, Moscovites.

Yet, are they?

Not everyone argues. Some keep silent. Take that tall man for instance, with the clear eyes and beard; a close scrutiny would show a scar on his nose. He had said nothing even when a heated conversation arose about some leaflets found on the carriage seats.

They were printed leaflets, but clearly secret and seditious, for they did not bear the usual stamped police permission. What is more they told how the workers of the Obukhov Plant in St. Petersburg had gone on strike the preceding spring, how they had driven off the police

* *Sarafan*—a Russian national dress worn by women.—*Tr.*

with stones and had resisted the troops. Although the soldiers finally prevailed and the demonstrators were prosecuted, the Obukhov strike showed that the tsarist troops could be fought successfully even on open ground; hence the workers' party was calling on the workers to stand up for their rights on all occasions, as the Obukhov workers did.

The top margin of the leaflet carried the following words in italics:

*Workers of All Countries, Unite!*

and at the end were the words:

MOSCOW COMMITTEE
RUSSIAN SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC LABOUR PARTY

The argument was about these final words. None of the arguers could properly explain what was the proletariat or a Social-Democrat. But they all agreed that the leaflet was seditious and that made them doubt the authenticity of the final words. There was nothing strange about factory workers mutinying in St. Petersburg—it was possible. But here in Moscow—Oh, no. Not for nothing did its churches number forty times forty. And there was not a hint of sedition: neither in the city, nor in the suburban textile district through which the train was now crawling. True, there had been a strike at the Morozov Textile Mill. And *what* a strike it had been. But that was in 1885 and now it was January 1902.

"These leaflets were meant for the weavers, I'm quite sure," someone said. "It's Sunday, market day. People are going to the market in Orekhovo-Zuyevo. That's why they've slipped those leaflets into the compartments."

"They!" Who were "they"?—that question remained unanswered. Goodness only knew what words like proletarian and Social-Democrat meant!

It was not surprising that the people arguing in the train did not know the meaning of those words. Most of them were shop-keepers going to Orekhovo-Zuyevo to buy stocks for their shops. But it was surprising that these words were unfamiliar to some workers sitting near them and listening in silence, their lips hidden in their thick tangled beards, and to that educated-looking man with the clear eyes. He was asked, but he only shook his head. Incidentally, he did not wait to hear the end of the argument, but got off at one of the smaller stations, taking with him the black foreign-made suit-case with shining metal fittings.

Another small dirty-looking railway station, with an old tumble-down wooden platform. But the air, frosty and invigorating, was rent by the merry ringing of a high-pitched bell.

It was Sunday. Here, too, it was market day.

Guided by the tipsy hand of the bald-headed sexton, the bronze bell had been pealing with shrill merriment since morning. The sexton was outdoing himself in sweet anticipation of his share of the collection in the church. The plate that had gone round after mass had returned heavy with coin. The church was poor, for the entire factory town—a town only by name—actually consisted of miserable hovels and wattled fences. Only one street was cobbled, and in the spring and autumn it was hard to walk along the others either in top-boots or galoshes. But the church was always full on the Sabbath and on holidays. It was particularly crowded today. The weavers, both men and women, had been specially zealous about putting their small donations and even five-kopek pieces on the silver plate carried by the church elder, an eminent merchant with a gold medallion dangling from a ribbon round his neck. They had been so zealous because this was no ordinary day. The mill-owner had given orders for everyone to go to the mill yard after mass.

He was coming down from Moscow to address the workers in person. It must be about something important for his honour would never have bothered himself over trifles. It was the job of the manager to deal with routine matters.

The factory was less than two *versts* from the town. Beyond the high brick wall, built by serf and convict labour, the gilt halo round a large icon of Sergei of Radonezh rose up against the grey, snow-laden sky. Men and women were pouring through the iron gates that had been flung wide open. The saint on the icon looked stern and his grey beard flowed to the ground; one could not tell whether the gesture of the fingers of his raised hand, painted a dark brown, was meant as a blessing or a threat.

Beneath the icon a lamp burned dimly night and day in a vessel that had not been washed or cleaned for many a long week. Attached to the lamp by a rusty chain, was an iron cup for good-will offerings.

Over the gates a wrought sign in odd Slavonic lettering read:

COTTON MILL

*SERGEI PORFIRYEVICH PROSHIN*

Hereditary Honorary Citizen

And higher up, over the ligature, was the factory trademark: bear in a sarafan.

The trademark was famous not only within the Russian empire, but also abroad, in Persia, for instance.

There were two Sergeis—one on the sign, the other on the icon. Porfiry Proshin, a guild merchant, had christened his son in honour of the Radonezh saint, the founder of Troitse-Sergei Monastery. It was rather convenient having the icon near the wall, for already at the gates, under the "bear," the worker had to doff his cap to make the sign of the cross.

Today, as always, the workers took their caps off at the gates, crossed themselves and surged on in an endless stream. The Proshin Mill employed a little under fifteen hundred workers. The yard was already teeming with people, while more and more continued to enter.

A short, spare man, dressed simply in an overcoat of expensive material and carrying a sheaf of blue files and a big abacus under his arm, strode across the yard towards the gates. He carefully avoided the pressing crowds, and bowed politely to everyone he knew. He looked downcast.

"Mister Book-Keeper!" someone called out after him. "Gustylyov! Ivan Yefimovich!"

Ivan Yefimovich walked on, pretending not to hear. Outside the mill he turned to the left past the high iron fence. There a girl hurriedly stepped up to him. She was wearing a short fur coat and a warm woollen kerchief.

"What's the matter, Ivan Yefimovich? Why have the workers been assembled?"

The book-keeper looked with pleasure at the girl's lovely face. Frost and anxiety had heightened her colour.

"I can't say exactly," he said, shrugging his shoulders. "But I think its about a cut in wages. They have been cut at the Konshin and Morozov mills. I believe Proshin will do the same."

"Cut the wages!" the girl exclaimed angrily. "How can he make them any lower? As it is the people are living from hand to mouth, half starving."

Ivan Yefimovich shrugged his shoulders again.

"It is hard, I must admit. That is probably why he is coming down himself. He counts on talking to them like a father."

"What about us?" the girl interrupted him.

"Us?" the book-keeper scowled. "Incidentally, I hardly think we should be seen talking in public. Dangerous. It's not conspiratorial."

"What nonsense!" the girl said, gesticulating her hands in annoyance. "Do you think it is possible for the factory book-keeper and the local schoolmistress not to know each other in a hole like this? I'm sure, everyone is astonished to see us talking 'in public'!" she mocked disgustedly. "We may even be in love. Who's business is it? Conspiracy!"

The book-keeper flushed and looked offended. He wanted to say something, but the girl did not let him:

"What I want to know is why haven't you called us together if you think Proshin plans cutting wages. We've got to organize some resistance."

The book-keeper looked round in alarm, but there was no one near enough to hear them. He twisted his lips into a sneer.

"Stop him? With the sort of people we've got here? Don't you know them yet, Irina Dmitriyevna? These people aren't like the Obukhov workers. They only call themselves workers. Nine out of ten are still more peasant than the peasants themselves, even though some families have been working for three generations. Can you get people like that to move?"

"They're starving," Irina repeated. "I visited the factory barracks the day before yesterday. The sight of the children brings tears to your eyes. Their little faces are waxen, they're pale as death. Half of them have no shoes. They have to stay indoors in that stifling atmosphere. I simply can't imagine what will happen even if only a kopek is cut from the wages.

"They'll manage!" Gustylyov said sharply, and raised the collar of his overcoat. "You can't believe how tenaciously the human being clings on to life. If that weren't so the human race would have died out long ago."

He touched his hat and moved off. But the girl stopped him:

"No, wait a minute! We can't be so indifferent. Are we really going to do nothing about it? You're supposed to be the Party organizer. Oh, stop rolling your eyes about, no one's listening or cares! It was your duty to do something."

"What, for instance?" Gustylyov wearily eased his shoulders and adjusted the abacus and files under his arm. "And with whose help, may I ask? The people of your self-education circle? To be more precise, the small people of your small circle? Or young anarchists like Vasili Milenkin?... Or your famous Kozuba, the local workers' leader?"

"How can you talk like that!" The girl's eyes flashed angrily. "Kozuba is the foremost man among the workers. If you were as respected as he, you could have brought the men out with a single word. But you could not win him over. He not only doesn't belong to us, he even..." she bit her lip.

Gustylyov smirked.

"Say frankly that he would have been an enemy of Social-Democracy if there were no Comrade Irina in the organization and he had only me to deal with. I can't help it. You are welcome to the honour. Here he comes with his myrmidons."

He nodded towards a group of workers approaching the mill gates. They were talking heatedly to a man walking in front of them. He was square-built and middle-aged, and his hair was flecked with grey. Gustylyov compressed his lips and moved off quickly along the railings in the direction of the town.

The man waved a friendly hand to Irina.

"Good day, schoolmistress! Have you heard of the doings at the mill?"

"Hello, Kozuba."

They shook hands firmly. Kozuba was happy to see Irina, but his eyes under the thick knitted brows looked stern as he said:

"The master's ordered us to assemble in the yard. You may be sure he's got some dirty trick up his sleeve. Vasili, you see, says we should lock him up if there's any pressure. After the St. Petersburg fashion. Have you read the leaflet about the Obukhov workers? It's a good one. Not Gustylyov's style, that's obvious."

The men laughed.

"I don't see why we shouldn't lock him up," Vasili said. He was still a long-legged, ungainly youth. "There's nothing much in what the Obukhov workers did. Why I read..."

"There's the foreman," someone interrupted him. "Make off, mates, out of harm's way."

The men moved off. It was indeed the foreman coming out through the gates, wearing a rich fur coat and a high lambskin cap. A worker with a narrow forehead and long arms like an ape shuffled his worn shoes through the snow and kept bowing obsequiously as he sidled along by the foreman.

"Pyotr Ivanych, I beg you, put in a word for me with the master. You can get promotion for anyone with a snap of your fingers, I swear to God!"

The foreman's fat clean-shaven cheeks twitched slightly, inspiring the long-armed worker to greater effort.

"Pyotr Ivanych, I'll be eternally grateful! Ask him to make me a factory policeman. I swear I'll be worthy of the job... Tell his high dignity there'll be order at the factory if Mikhalchuk is made a policeman. Must I, with my abilities, waste my life working at the bench? You see, even a woman can do work like that if she's only allowed to. I implore you, Pyotr Ivanych, please!"

The foreman lazily moved his head in an indifferent nod.

"Oh, all right, I'll put in a word. By the way how does the police inspector know about you?"

Mikhalchuk bared his teeth happily.

"Ha-ha-ha. He told you about me, the inspector did? Of course he knows me! I had to see him on business. I'm guarding state interests, Pyotr Ivanych, I..."

The foreman cast a sidelong glance at the yard.

"You watch your step, my man. If the workers find out they'll most likely break your ribs. We'll have you on our hands then."

"No fear of that!" Mikhalchuk cried, and for some reason he raised both his heavy, ape-like arms and took off his cap. "Do you think I don't know how to handle them? Do you think I'm my own enemy?"

The foreman put out a hand and caught the ear of a boy lounging near the gates.

"Here, boy, run to the crossing! Over there. Stand round the corner. When you see the master's horses, hurry back here. Keep your eyes open! If you miss them we shan't have time to meet the master in proper style."

Mikhalchuk deferentially pointed towards the gloomy brick buildings standing far back in the yard.

"The master always comes by that road."

"Signallers have been standing there for a long time now," the foreman said. "I've sent the boy out to the other road just in case, by some chance, he took that road."

"Godfather! Pyotr Ivanych! Most honourable sir!"

A young man, accordion slung over his shoulder, strolled up to the gates in torn felt boots. The foreman turned on his heels and moved rapidly away as soon as he saw him.

"Wait, wait! You and none other christened me for life, you beetle soul, you! Ran me out of the factory, and

even swindled me out of the forty measly kopeks I was supposed to have been paid off with!"

But the foreman was already out of hearing. Escorted by Mikhalchuk he made for the high terrace of the main building. It was carpeted and there were chairs on it. "The place of execution," the workers called it. All the mill-owner's orders were issued from there.

The young man with the accordion hooted after the retreating figure of the foreman and joined the group round Kozuba, taking off his greasy, ragged cap.

Irina shook her head reprovingly.

"You're drunk again, Matvei!"

"You bet," he replied positively. "But tell me yourself, if a chap's life has been decided for him and they won't give him work is there anything else he can do but drink?" He winked towards the crowded yard. "What's this? Are they going to fight the master, Sergei Porfiryevich?"

"Fight?" Irina said slowly, her eyes pinned on the workers. "Oh, if only they would!"

"Why not? What's stopping them?"

Matvei put out his foot, showing the torn toe of his boot, swung the accordion up to his chest and drew out an ominous invocatory chord.

"Shall I give the weavers a hot one? There isn't anyone who won't fight to a song!"

"Give us the Morozov song!" Vasili shouted. "The one about the Morozov strike!" He knocked his cap over one ear and got ready to sing.

Beating time with his torn boot Matvei played a Russian national dance tune and his voice carried far despite its hoarseness:

*What a simpleton the working fellow is*
*Making money for the wealthy boss of his!*
*At the mills the greedy thief Morozov owns*

*From his heartless cheating everybody groans;*
*All his workers live in everlasting need,*
*Yet they're not to say a word against his greed!*

The voice, the sound of the accordion, the bass notes of which were especially deep in the January frost, brought the workers closer to the gates. Matvei sang with greater gusto:

*From the blood that we are spending, from our sweat*
*Comes the money that the money-bags will get,*
*And our poverty is all that we have got:*
*Aren't those money-bags a sneaking, swindling lot!*

Vasili caught up the refrain and he was joined by a tall man, standing next to him in a peakless grenadier cap minus the cockade; two or three others also joined in:

*It's the money-bags that have the power today,*
*And there's nobody more powerful than they.*
*Now, you fellows from the factory and mill,*
*Whom the money-bags are robbing at their will!*
*Come and find a way to clip the claws of*
*That confounded blood-sucker Morozov.*

More and more men and women, with a sprinkling of old men, crowded round the gates. But they maintained a sullen silence as they stood there pressed shoulder to shoulder. Only here and there did some young voices respond aggressively to the refrain. Matvei broke off his song as furiously and sharply as he had started it.

"A fat lot of help they are! Blasted peasants!"

He spat on the ground, wheeled on his heel and strode off without a backward glance. Irina's eyes flashed with anger. She almost cried out after him "Look in at Gustylyov's. You'll make a good pair, the two of you! Different birds but of the same feather."

"Here they come!"

Shouted wildly in a thin, boyish voice, the cry echoed through the crowd.

"Here he comes in person!"

Mikhalchuk rushed into the court-yard. The foreman hurried down the steps, holding up the ends of his fur coat. The crowd swarmed and pushed towards the gates. The worker in the grenadier cap ran out excitedly ahead of the others and waved a work-worn, sinewy hand:

"Line up, mates! Make the regulation guard of honour for the master!"

"What'll we use for rifles?" someone bantered.

The "grenadier" pointed to a heap of spades and brooms lying against the wall where they had been left after the grand cleaning the yard had been given that morning.

"To arms!"

The young men dashed for the brooms and spades, pushing aside Mikhalchuk, who tried to stop them.

"Tar-ras! Tar-ras!" Mikhalchuk shouted wildly, his arms flapping like the wings of a brood hen. "What are you doing? Lay off! Lay off, Rodionov, lay off I tell you!"

But the spades and brooms were already passing from hand to hand and the young men sped to the road, hurriedly lining up. The look-out at the cross-roads, a lively lad, was hopping in excitement and frenziedly signalling with a glove.

"Right dress!" Taras, the "grenadier," was really beginning to enjoy his role. "Look alive, lads; this is the way to present arms." He skilfully brought his spade up. "Do it all together now. You've got it. Have another try! One, two. Good. Stand at ease! Look smart as soon as he approaches," he stuck his chest out. "Pity Matvei's gone! He could have played something like 'How the Mice Buried the Cat.'"

The boy at the corner waved again, poked out his tongue and sprinted away from the mill. A horse's

head showed round the hut at the turning of the road.

"'Ten-shun! Pre-e-sent a-ar-ms!" the "grenadier" commanded in the fashion of an officer.

Spades and brooms rose in the air. The next instant they clattered down. Instead of the mill-owner's prize-winning dappled Orel thoroughbred and the stout coachman in his brocaded beaver-trimmed cap, a sorry hackney nag rounded the corner. The driver wore a threadbare peasant's coat and was sitting sideways in the box; behind him was a young man in a felt hat, his eyes expressing amazement at this unexpected and noisy reception.

The sledge drove past the crowd, turned another corner and headed for the town.

The "grenadier" swore gloomily and shook his fist in the direction in which the erstwhile look-out had disappeared.

"Oh, the little rogue, damn his soul! Calls himself a look-out, too! Put us to shame in front of a stranger. Just wait till I get my hands on him!"

"You're barking up the wrong tree, Taras," Vasili interceded. What's the lad got to do with it? You didn't put him there, the foreman did. So blame the foreman. I bet Pyotr Ivanych's heart is still in his boots."

Suddenly a bell was rung far down the court-yard near the terrace. All heads turned and the people sighed unanimously:

"The master!"

## *Chapter VIII*

## HIS HIGH DIGNITY

There was no mistake about it. It was the mill-owner.

He stood on the thick Persian carpet on the stone floor of the terrace, smoothing his grey beard that flowed over his raccoon coat, and nodding gravely and affably in

response to the salutes of the workers who had hurriedly bared their dishevelled heads. Next to him, shifting his weight from one foot to another, stood a livid-faced general in a greatcoat with red lapels and gold epaulets. Behind them, trying to look as inconspicuous as possible, were the manager, the foreman, the police inspector and other officials in greatcoats, with swords or revolvers at their sides.

Vasili gave a low whistle.

"Look at that! Our benefactor has even dragged out the governor himself! I see we're going to have fireworks. And those miracle-working icons are only brought out on a saint's day or when war's declared, when there's a great slaughter."

A boy dashed in breathlessly from the road. He was the lad who had given the false alarm.

"The Cossacks are coming," he whispered to the nearest man.

The "grenadier" caught him as he passed by.

"Lying again? I'll wring your neck!"

"May I drop dead if I am! Look through the gates. You can see them for yourself."

But that was not necessary. There was no need for the "grenadier" to strain his ears in order to hear the soft thud of unhurried hoofs on the loose snow along the side of the road, the ring of the hetman's staff, the clash of brass cymbals, and the lilting devil-may-care Cossack song.

"Those accursed leather throats! Cossacks!"

The squadron drew up at the gates. In front were two officers, the bugler and the song leaders. Another officer rode at the squadron's flank. The men had locks of hair dangling from under their high, shaggy fur caps. The Cossacks looked sideways at the workers. Rifles swung at their backs, sabres rattled against their stirrups, fingers toyed with leather-thonged whips.

Line after line of Cossacks rounded the corner on prancing, mettlesome horses. And there was no doubt that they were all heading for the mill.

Kozuba screwed up his eyes as though against the wind and watched the Cossacks attentively.

"It's always like that," he muttered slowly. "Where the governor is, there are the Cossacks always; and where there are Cossacks there are whips. It's a good thing, lads, that we're in our winter clothes—sheepskin coats and things. If anyone gets a stroke of the whip it won't hurt so much."

The factory bell, pulled diligently by a hurrying servile hand, rang out again. Proshin took off his fur cap and made the sign of the cross. At this display of piety, the governor, without baring his head, made the sign of the cross somewhere above his stomach. The men in uniform, standing behind him, also crossed themselves, and the workers occupying the court-yard again removed their caps, while the women in their shawls bowed low and reverently.

The "grenadier" made an exaggerated sign of the cross and winked at Vasili.

"I've crossed myself but that won't save me from going to bed on an empty stomach. But why aren't you praying? If one icon can't save you, perhaps the whole iconostasis can. Have you forgotten how to cross yourself?"

Vasili gave banter for banter.

"I don't even remember the priest christening me, and I've clean forgotten how I was born."

Banter for banter, but Vasili's eyes were keen and anxious, and he kept them fixed on Proshin.

"Fellow Christians!" Proshin said, without raising his voice, as though he were in his own dining-room with the samovar steaming in front of him. The workers were so grimly, stonily silent that his voice carried to the

farthest corners of the yard. "It is with bad news that I have come to you. I scarcely know how to put it. There is no word in the language our Lord blessed us with to describe it. I shall have to use a foreign word, for this misfortune is new to our people. In Russia, by God's will, there is now a *crisis*." He raised a threatening finger. "Trade is at a standstill. Warehouses are full of goods that no one is buying. The banks are not extending credit to the textile industry, and, in truth, there is nothing that can be said against them. Indeed, it is not worth their while. To tell you frankly, not only is this mill bringing me losses, but it is leading me to bankruptcy. I have thought the matter over at great length, I have sought the advice of many people and I have come to the conclusion that my only solution is to close down the mill."

There was a stir in the crowd, which rocked slightly and then stiffened again. Proshin lowered his head with a sigh and threw up his hands.

"That is the only way out of the difficulty, but as a Christian I cannot but grieve when I think of you. Unlike the mills of the foreigners, my mill has been here for a long time and is not under treasury control, meaning no offence to the treasury. Your grandfathers worked here, your fathers and mothers worked here, and now you have been here for many years. We have always lived together as friends, and I cannot bear to think of throwing you out on the street. Where will you go with your little children?"

Not a murmur came from the workers. The women, even the most quarrelsome, stood as though petrified. They knew they could expect anything from Proshin, but never had they dreamed of the mill closing down. Even Kozuba was taken aback. He did not reply when Vasili whispered in his ear:

"What is he up to, eh, Kozuba? What do you say to giving it him, the damned tyrant?"

Proshin swept his eyes kite-like over the crowd. The silence brought a faint smile to his bearded lips.

"Happily I am a God-fearing man," he continued, his voice suddenly rising till it sounded like an archdeacon's. He assumed a dignified pose. "For His sake I have decided to continue bearing my losses. He may have mercy on me for my charity and save me from complete ruin. I shall give you work as before. For the time being we shall be making material for army shirts and the like. And if I have to take losses, I shall do so for the sake of my country. Naturally, the rates will have to be reduced."

"That's what he's been driving at all the time, the dirty blood-sucker!" Vasili breathed in relief. "Now we know what he wants."

Proshin's voice grew harsher and more imperious.

"I shall not be able to keep the mill going if we adhere to the old rates. That would make me a beggar and force you out. We shall have to reduce them by five kopeks a day at the very least."

A shudder went through the crowd. But perplexity quickly gave way to deep anger. The stupefaction of the workers at the thought that the mill might close immediately vanished. There was nowhere they could go with their families. It was January, just after the New Year, when the last kopek had been spent! When Proshin spoke of closing the factory, the ground seemed to open under their feet and they felt as though they were plunging into empty space. Even the strongest among them had been shaken. But if it was only a question of wages, the matter could be disputed.

"How can you cut the wages any lower?" Vasili yelled at the top of his voice, before Proshin had finished speaking.

"We're bloating from hunger as it is! We work sixteen hours a day and you pay us eight rubles a month. That isn't enough to feed on!"

"Quite right!" the "grenadier" roared, boring his way forward to the terrace. "What do you think you're going to do? Suck our last drop of blood, you vampire!"

The people surged forward, stamping their feet, and hundreds of shouts rent the air:

"He's right! We haven't any strength left!"

"We're not making even eight rubles with the deductions."

"You're paying women and day labourers fifteen kopeks a day."

"And even then they never get the money. Your factory shop sees to that."

"It's charging double prices."

"If you take another five kopeks—what's going to be left?"

The workers at the back pushed against those in front, and suddenly the whole crowd pressed forward. Little clouds of steam, like smoke from discharged rifles, came from the shouting mouths, and hovered over the heads of the crowd. The governor fell back half a step, his face growing still more livid. The police inspector stepped forward, his hand on his sword.

Taras was already at the bottom of the steps.

"Your rotten woof is making us spit blood!" he cried, a reddish growth showing on his upturned chin; he had not shaved for many days. "Here, take it!"

A gob of spittle, sticky and dark with blood, landed at Proshin's feet.

Squeamishly the general drew his neck into his shoulders, and looked askance at the man. The police inspector instantly arched his fleshy back like an old well-fed cat eyeing a mouse, while policemen in black great-coats detached themselves from the back row of uniformed figures, and jumped clumsily, from the terrace into the heaps of snow that had been swept up from the yard.

But Proshin did not lose his benevolent poise. He raised a plump, senile hand. The police inspector straightened up and looked inquiringly at his superiors.

"What are we to understand from that, my man?" Proshin asked, looking past Taras. "It seems you do not agree..."

"To a new rate?" Taras looked round at the crowd. Two steps away he saw Vasili's tense face contorted with rage. "To work without pay for your fat stomach? No, I don't agree."

"Well, I am not going to force you." Proshin sighed blandly and looked at the governor. "God forbid that I should do that. If you do not agree—you can be paid off and clear out! Ivan Zakharovich..."

The manager was already standing at Proshin's elbow. He moved closer to his employer. Proshin pointed to the "grenadier" with a smile:

"Will you take the trouble to go to the office and pay off at once this bold soldier (his smile broadened), that is if he has anything due to him."

The manager walked down the steps. The police inspector followed him. The policemen were already waiting at the bottom, adjusting their waist-belts and greatcoats.

The "grenadier," his pale lips compressed in disgust, strode off towards the office. But Vasili caught him by the hand when he had only taken two steps.

"No, wait! This sort of thing isn't settled single-handed. You weren't speaking for yourself. You were speaking for all of us. And you're not going to answer alone."

"You, too?" the manager muttered, glancing apprehensively at the crowd. "Keep silent, or you'll be paid off, too."

But Vasili shook his head mockingly.

"That remains to be seen; we'll see who gets his due. We've also a score to settle with you, rest assured..."

He looked round at the men beside him and shook his head again; all the workers began talking at once. Hurried whispers were exchanged on the terrace. A tall officer, wearing spurs and looking like a fighting cock, seemed to spring up from the ground beside the general. The general gave an order, speaking behind the palm of his hand. The officer saluted and marched rapidly to a side gate in the back wall.

"He's gone to fetch the Cossacks. The Cossacks!" was the whisper that flew quickly from mouth to mouth.

The buzz of voices died down. The workers drew closer together. Some of them were already looking towards the gates, expecting, at any moment, to hear the sound of the yelling Cossacks galloping into the yard. They would be standing in their stirrups to give more play to their arms, their shoulders would be squared and they would keep their mounts on a short rein; the horses would then charge the people well.

Proshin stepped up to the edge of the terrace. He was no longer smiling. His forehead was wrinkled under the sable hat, and as he spoke a hitherto unnoticeable long yellow tooth made him look like a hideous magician in a fairy-tale.

"What sort of talk is this?" he said. "My intentions are the best in the world, but now we have a riot, nothing less, and before His Excellency the Governor. There is no dispute: my duty was to tell you the position and whether you accept my terms or not is your business. I don't force anyone to work for me. If you don't like it you are welcome to go. The more workers I pay off the easier it will be for me, as Saint Sergei is my witness. If you decide to go, then leave my factory barracks once and for all and take your chattels with you. The law does not permit me to keep people in my barracks who deliberately refuse to work. His Excellency here will confirm this. Get out, I say!"

"Into the cold—naked? You want us to take the children naked into the snow? Is that what you want?"

The voice came from the middle of the crowd, but was immediately drowned by the wailing of the women.

"They're coming!" someone shouted from the gates and those nearest to it pushed away.

Mikhalchuk suddenly appeared in front of the crowd, waving his long ape-like arms.

"Women, silence! The master wants to talk," he cried and turned back to the terrace.

The crowd fell silent. The swaying ranks pressed closer together.

"What's this—a noose round our necks?"

"Why a noose? Who said a noose?" Proshin craned his neck as though he really wanted to see the speaker in the dense crowd of more than a thousand people. All the others on the terrace also craned their necks. "Why a noose? You are free and can do as you wish. By the grace of the tsar you are no longer serfs. You are, one might say, your own masters. You are joining the strikers of your own free will!"

"We're not strikers, for heavens' sake!" a frightened voice piped up and it was impossible to tell if it came from a woman or an old man.

This time it was the governor who spoke. He obviously felt embarrassed, standing still and saying nothing. He spoke, surprisingly, in a high treble.

"Don't waste your time with them, Sergei Porfiryevich! There's only one thing to do with such people."

"Yes, you're right," Proshin shook his head. "I ought to turn my back on them, but I'm sorry for them, Your Excellency. They're good people, only they're—ignorant. If we don't pity them then God won't either. However, as you say, we'll put an end to it."

He scanned the crowd and pointed to a thin, ragged weaver in the front row. Instantly the people round him stepped away as though he were a leper.

"What is your name?"

"Mikhail Berezhnoi," the weaver mumbled.

"Do you agree to work at the new rate?"

Berezhnoi looked sideways at the workers near him, but failed to meet the gaze of anyone in the silent crowd: the workers were standing with their eyes to the ground. A woman beside him fell to her knees, sobbing quietly.

"Misha—Mish—spare the children! Have pity on the children, Mikhail! They're only little..."

Mikhail looked round again.

"Mates! How's it to be?"

"Decide for yourself—as your conscience tells you," someone said without raising his eyes.

"My conscience?" the weaver shouted and tore the rags from his chest. "If I'm to decide that way, then—here! Drink my blood, tyrant! I don't agree!"

"Mi-kha-il!"

The wail was taken up by other women. Their howling drowned Proshin's words, as he shifted his finger from Berezhnoi to another weaver, who had incautiously looked up. Vasili shouted out something.

The worker at whom Proshin pointed staggered up to the terrace. But another man, whom the workers standing in front hardly knew, pushed his way forward unbidden out of the crowd. A policeman dexterously caught him from behind by the elbow, but promptly released his hold.

"Stop torturing us!" the weaver panted. "You've got strength on your side! Stop, I say, stop tearing our hearts out! We agree."

A shiver ran through the yard, from the terrace to the gates, from the first man to the last; and the words "We agree" passed along the ranks, and it was difficult to un-

derstand whether all the workers were in agreement or none of them.

Taras raised his hand.

"Comrades!"

There was a stir among the workers; someone tried to push forward, shouting and frantically waving his arms about. But loudest of all was the heart-rending, chilling, and horribly frightened wailing and sobbing of the women.

"We all agree!"

The Cossack horses, drawn up and waiting opposite the factory gates, grew restless. The police inspector nudged Taras' shoulder:

"Come on!" he said, "you've played your game out—now we'll play ours."

Vasili glanced at Taras, but the warning in Taras' eyes clearly said: "Don't do anything, just let it pass."

Proshin crossed himself, this time with his hat on. "That's all right, then. You should have started that way, instead of getting on your hind legs like bears! So you've decided. Disperse to your homes. We have kept His Excellency here long enough. Fortunately the weather is mild."

He turned his back on the crowd with an air of indifference as though the workers standing there in crushed silence no longer existed either for him or for his guests.

"Please come into the house, gentlemen," he said with a courteous bow, "and join me in some refreshments."

. . . . . .

"Is this the end?"

Irina breathed heavily, watching the workers dispersing singly. The Cossacks were still holding their horses on a tight rein near the open gates under the bear in the *sarafan*, standing mockingly on its hind legs.

Irina looked round for Kozuba. She had seen him in the crowd, had seen his thick brows contract over darkened eyes, as soon as Vasili broke through to the front of the crowd when Taras was led away by the police. She had expected him to take his stand at the head of the workers, and to hear him call on them to strike. All of them knew and respected him. But he had not come forward; he had not given the call to strike.

She closed her eyes.

She heard Kozuba calling her. His voice was calm as usual, and he walked steadily up to her.

"Why are you here? You had no business to come. You'll be watched, and your being a schoolmistress won't stop them. What do you want, to be put out of action before the time comes?"

Irina looked at Kozuba and then, in spite of herself, said in an offended tone:

"Action? What action? You saw them yourself—like a flock of sheep."

She raised her hand to her face.

"How like a flock of sheep?" Kozuba asked. His voice was so stern and cold that Irina's heart sank.

She realized she had said something wrong, something horrid, that she could not take back. The blood mounted to her face and she caught Kozuba by the sleeve:

"Forgive me. I—I said it because it hurts so much. You know that is not what I think. You understand yourself. I know the sort of people they really are. I just didn't expect them to give in."

"And have the Cossacks whipping them into submission, is that it?" said Kozuba harshly, narrowing his eyes. "No, my friend, that is not the way it's done."

"We must see about getting Vasili and Taras released," Irina said hurriedly, trying hard to speak in a calm and business-like tone. "Let's see Gustylyov about it, Com-

rade Kozuba. We must talk it over and come to some decision."

Kozuba beckoned to a young man passing by.

"See here, Syoma. Tell the men to meet in the drying shed at the usual place. In half an hour, say. We'll be there."

When Syoma went off, Kozuba turned again to Irina.

"So you're thinking of going to Gustylyov?" He screwed up his left eye derisively, and raised one thick eyebrow. "Well, there won't be any harm in that, at any rate. We have half an hour, and the weather, as Proshin said, is mild."

## *Chapter IX*

## FORMER COMRADES

Gustylyov waited. He was confident that after the meeting at which Proshin was to announce the wage reduction, Irina would come and again reproach him for his "inactivity," as she called it. And he knew he would be unable to convince her that this was not inactivity but the most correct Social-Democratic policy. He had left purposely before the negotiations with Proshin began. It was all clear as daylight—but try to explain that to her.

He did not relish the talk he knew they were going to have. These quarrels had become quite regular now. The girl had got completely out of hand. It was strange to recall how submissive and trusting she had been when she first joined the organization, how joyfully and unquestioningly she had accepted every word. But now—she had two words to say to every one of his.

Gustylyov irritably paced his room. He loved his room; it was cosy and he was rather proud of it. It was a model of order; everything in it was tidy; it was expensively

furnished, from the cherry-coloured curtains that hung in folds over the window to the rug near the bed and the hand-carved walnut book-shelf on which the books with their gilt-lettered backs were arranged neatly according to height. Whenever he spoke about them, his favourite phrase was: "Not many, but the best." But now, waiting for the inevitable quarrel and Irina's rebukes, he thought the room looked cheerless.

The front door slammed. Steps sounded in the corridor. They seemed too heavy to be Irina's. Hers were always so quick and light. Or was she wearing boots? Could the meeting have ended quickly after all?

Someone knocked.

"Come in!" Gustylyov said.

A young man entered. He wore a light coat and felt hat and carried a suit-case in his hand.

"Hello, old man! Have you forgotten your exile in Vyatka?"

The young man had clear, kindly eyes, a smooth, broad forehead, a short beard and a scar on his nose. Gustylyov recognized him at once by the scar.

"Bauman!"

He pronounced the name so loudly that the visitor automatically turned his head to the door with a reproachful look at Gustylyov. Hurriedly the latter justified himself:

"Never mind, there are no strangers in the house. The only other person here is a feldsher, but he's a very charming man and at bottom a sympathizer. Anyway he's out at the moment. Well, tell me, what's brought you here. Where have you been all this time? Your term of exile must have ended, I suppose? As for me, you can see for yourself that I'm quite rehabilitated since that year in Vyatka."

"So I see," Bauman smiled and his eye took in the curtains, the rug near the bed, the hand-carved walnut

shelf, the writing table with the neat pile of files under the abacus. "But why no canary?"

"You've certainly not changed. You always find something to joke about," Gustylyov said with a wry smile. "Take your coat off. Make yourself at home. Where have you come from?"

"Where?" Bauman hung up his coat and hat. "From a provincial town called Geneva."

"From emigration?" Gustylyov's cheeks twitched, but he recovered himself instantly. "Did you come—er—illegally?"

"Why, of course!" Bauman nodded merrily. "Why do you ask? You were there when I escaped from exile. May I have a wash?"

He went to the wash-stand without waiting for a reply. Gustylyov chewed his lower lip.

"How did you find me?"

"I didn't. In Moscow I asked the comrades about contacts at the textile mills. Well, they told me about you."

"They gave you my name and address?" Gustylyov raised his shoulders indignantly. "Why, the devil... That's what they call conspiracy! Our meeting place is at the school."

"At Irina Gzovskaya's? I know." Bauman turned his lathered face to Gustylyov. "You're unreasonable about the people on the Committee. If you must know, *Mark Petrovich Vasilyev* sent me."

Three words enunciated separately with the accent on the last. Gustylyov's bushy eyebrows rose high in astonishment:

"Oho! Not from Mark and not from Mark Petrovich, but from Mark Petrovich Vasilyev. A three-fold mark of confidence! That means you're from the centre?"

"From the *Iskra*," Bauman nodded over the wash-basin.

Gustylyov absently fingered his beard:

"I see—I remember now. The last time I was in Moscow I heard there was news from abroad that Lenin's men would be coming to Russia."

"Lenin's men? You mean Party men, of course?" Bauman straightened up and began drying his face. "They've come all right. It's time to put an end to the small clannish groups. We're on the upgrade now! There are more and more strikes and they have to be led. We need a united centre, a general headquarters!" he laughed. "There's revolution in the air! From what I've seen in Moscow, they're bogged down! *The Rabocheye Delo** supporters are too phlegmatic, they've settled down for good. They expect to go to paradise with their brakes on. They want to keep out of politics."

Without looking at Gustylyov, who was feeling embarrassed, Bauman hung up the towel and went over to the book-shelf.

"There's a good proverb that says 'tell me who your friends are and I'll tell you what you are like.' " He ran a finger lightly along the back of the books. "Molokhovets, *Present to Young Housewives.* Is it a cookery book? Are you thinking of getting married?"

"No," Gustylyov said hesitantly. "The feldsher and I sometimes do a little cooking for the sake of variety."

"Struve?" Bauman exclaimed, pulling out a thin book. "Bernstein, Prokopovich, Tugan-Baranovsky. Oh-ho! The whole anti-Marxist alms-house!"

He finally turned and faced Gustylyov, whose air of ruffled dismay told him everything.

"Well, well, well! As Gogol's *Inspector-General* has it: 'This is a surprise!' So you're laid up bad with Economism."

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* *Rabocheye Delo (Workers' Cause)*—an Economist magazine. It was the organ of the League of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad, and was published in Geneva from 1899 to 1902.—*Ed.*

"I don't call that a disease," Gustylyov said. He kept his eyes averted, but his voice was steady. "I am positive that for a Russian Marxist there is only one correct path, and that is to take part in, or, to be more exact, to help the proletariat in their *economic* (he put special emphasis on the word) struggle jointly with the liberal opposition of the whole country. Yes, yes, we do not mince words: liberal opposition! That is the path of genuine, democratic Marxism. And what Lenin calls Marxism and what he wants to impose upon us with his *Iskra* will only drive us deeper into this totally unnecessary, deadly underground. 'A political organization of the working class,' 'an independent workers' party.' It would be madness! Only in Geneva, where a man is hopelessly out of touch with Russian reality, could ideas like that enter one's head..."

Bauman leaned against the window jamb, laughing softly.

"Don't pile on the agony, my dear fellow: I've heard all that time and time again. Only I've been misled by Grigory Vasilyevich, your Moscow chief. The way he spoke about you I thought you were a supporter of the *Iskra*. Did he want to shunt me on to a siding, like the stationmaster shunts the off-schedule train? Or did he hope I would tell you *Iskra* plans, and you..."

"He's simply observing the rules of conspiracy, like a true Party worker should," Gustylyov said with a shrug. "I expect you were given the address before anyone knew you were a Leninist."

"Of course!" Bauman laughed heartily and went to the table. "You put that over in truly military style. 'On the war-path,'" he recalled the red-haired boy on the train. "Incidentally, won't you give me some tea? To tell you the truth, I'm still frozen from the journey. Well, how about the plans?"

Gustylyov sniffed irritably.

"Your plans? Lenin published them openly for the world to read. All about the agents he was sending and why he was sending them. It's all in his article *Where To Begin?*, in the fourth issue of *Iskra.*"

"Quite right," Bauman coolly confirmed. "Truth need not be hidden, you can proclaim it as loudly as you wish."

The front door slammed again, and a moment later there was a quick, light knocking on the door of the room.

"Who is it?" Gustylyov called, deliberately raising his voice.

"Irina," a woman replied in a deep melodious voice.

"Ah, Gzovskaya." Bauman kicked his suit-case away from the door and turned the door knob before Gustylyov could open his mouth. "Come in, please!"

Irina looked at him from the threshold in surprise, while, behind her, Kozuba frowned at the stranger's elegant suit.

Bauman bowed with the feigned gallantry of a salesman offering textiles to a young lady.

"Allow me to introduce myself. Drobachov, traveller for the firm of Kursner and Co., Berlin. I am here to see samples of textiles put out by the local mill."

Kozuba ignored the bow.

"We've come to see you, Mr. Book-Keeper," he growled in a nasal twang, knitting his heavy brows, "about the wage books. There's something wrong with the calculations. But I see you've a visitor. We'd better..."

"No, no, why should you?" Bauman said quickly. "I don't see why you and the young lady should make a second journey because of me. The more so since it's Sunday. So you work even on holidays? Let's see your books. We'll have everything fixed up in a jiffy."

He put out his hand and though he spoke seriously there was a merry twinkle in his eye. Kozuba's frown deepened. He had bungled with this story about the

books. He hadn't got them with him, and even if he had, the book-keeper would have been unable to check them at home, without his own books. Even this stranger had realized that that was not why they had come, and he was clearly ridiculing him. He had no idea how to extricate himself from this embarrassing situation.

And there was Gustylyov standing like a dummy.

But Kozuba did not try to extricate himself. He simply said nothing, turned and made for the door. Irina moved after him.

"Gzovskaya!" Bauman called softly.

She turned her head.

"Regards from Mark," Bauman said seriously.

Irina wheeled round. She looked questioningly at Gustylyov. He nodded reluctantly. Irina offered her hand to Bauman.

"So that's who you are. You know I thought you really were a commercial traveller. And Kozuba, though he is such a good judge of people, he too. . ."

Bauman looked fixedly at the worker, who had come back into the room after Irina.

"One of our people, too?"

"Your people?" Kozuba said, screwing up his left eye. "No. I belong to myself."

"You've come at the right moment," Irina interposed. "Perhaps you and Comrade Gustylyov can tell us what we're to do at the mill now. There's been a cut in wages."

"Our mill's not the only one," Gustylyov snapped. "It's the same all over the district. You couldn't expect Proshin to be any different when even the Morozov Mill has reduced the rates. Ours is only a small mill: Bear in a *Sarafan* indeed! The workers accepted the cuts, didn't they?"

"Not all of them!" Irina cried heatedly. "Vasili and Taras protested."

"Well, and what happened?"

Irina lowered her eyes.

"They were arrested."

"In front of the workers?" Bauman asked. Wrinkles furrowed his brow and his face seemed to have grown darker.

Irina nodded without looking up.

"There you are!" Gustylyov said with a triumphant shake of his head. "I was telling her only this morning..."

"So you think Proshin did the right thing?" Kozuba cut him short.

Gustylyov shrugged his shoulders.

"The workers accepted the terms; you've said it yourself. Their will is law."

"Will?" Irina exclaimed, tossing one of her plaits over her shoulder.

Bauman only then noticed that she wore her hair in two thick long plaits.

"You believe they themselves want to starve? Can't you see that they were caught by the throat and they couldn't and didn't know how to defend themselves? And what did we do? Instead of showing them the way we failed to lift a finger. We, the Social-Democrats! It's a disgrace! I say it in front of our comrades here: It is your fault. You let the workers be taken unawares!"

"I?" Gustylyov, highly indignant, walked to the table. "What did you expect me to do? At the mill..." He pulled the abacus towards him and the counters began to click rhythmically under his practised fingers, "There are a thousand three hundred and eighty-one workers. Of them..." again: click, click, click... "nine—eight—seven—nine hundred and eighty-seven are women. Naturally they are backward..."

Kozuba gave Irina a friendly nudge with his elbow.

"Hear that, nanny goat? Backward element!"

"...while the organized workers," Gustylyov con-

tinued, slowly moving one counter after another, "number eleven. Altogether, not counting Vasili and Taras (this time he clicked the counters loudly), there are nine. A mean figure to subtract from, I must say."

He turned the abacus on its side with the habitual gesture of the book-keeper. The counters rained down: the number was eliminated.

"Interesting!" Bauman said with a burst of laughter. "You did that expertly—subtracting one man from another. One might think that our heads are only there for you to count them."

Kozuba wriggled his moustache:

"Then, according to you, we should curl up on a park bench and do nothing?"

"There's a more appropriate saying," Gustylyov growled. "About those who brandish their fists when the fighting is over."

"Has there been a fight, then?"

Hearing Bauman's quiet, suggestive question, Kozuba and Irina pricked up their ears and turned towards him.

"You think we should fight?" Irina asked.

"Why do you think I came to the district?" he returned, very seriously.

Irina clapped her hands for joy. Gustylyov's lips quivered.

"Fight?" he exclaimed. "Strike? You're out of your mind! Plain and simple Jacobinism! Revolutionary phrasemongering! You won't hold out for a single day. It's winter-time. In addition to food the workers have to think of fuel and clothing. Just trouble yourself to go to the workers' homes: half the kids have to stay in bed—they've got no shoes. And the children all howling—makes your heart break. I tell you they wouldn't hold out for a day. And without all that, it's just the same: you can't call a strike when there actually is a crisis. Even the *Russkiye Novosti* confirms that there's a crisis."

"Yes, of course," Bauman replied, smiling blandly, "you might also quote the police paper, *Moskovskiye Vedomosti*. It's clear the liberals will also support the hand that feeds them. They have to trumpet about the crisis as loud as they can, because a strike now would be a stab in the back for the Moscow textile manufacturers. Morozov, Konshin and Proshin have just signed a large government contract, an army rush order. If they don't fulfil the contract it will go from Moscow to St. Petersburg or Lodz. They'll do anything to keep that contract in their pockets. You, of course, know that army contracts are the most profitable. They're making millions on them."

"A contract? How do you know they've got one?" Gustylyov muttered.

"I should be asking you why you don't know. How can you lead a fight when you don't know what's going on in the enemy camp?"

Irina exchanged glances with Kozuba.

"I am a little doubtful whether it's true about the order," she faltered. "If it's true then I can't see why they are risking a conflict. Why should they be cutting wages?"

"The crux of the matter is that they are evidently convinced there will be no conflict." Bauman gesticulated a little with his hands. "They have their own agents among the workers. They're not working in the dark. You've just heard not a worker from among the masses but a Social-Democrat, the organizer of one of our largest districts, telling you how many thousand weavers there are in the district, and proving to you only a moment ago that a strike can't be called, that the workers must give in. By fighting back we shall prove very simply that they went ahead with this wage cut calculating they could do so with impunity."

"That's pure demagogy!" Gustylyov retorted. "You know perfectly well we can't fight; the workers are not organized."

"It's only during a fight, in a struggle that the masses organize," Bauman replied firmly.

"Let's go!" Kozuba pulled his cap down over his eyes with a clumsy, forceful movement. "I gave the order to meet at the drying shed to talk things over. We'll have it out there. What's your name, Comrade?"

"Rook."

"Rook?" Kozuba repeated thoughtfully. "The rook is the herald of spring. Not a bad nickname, Comrade!" He was silent for a second, then added, nodding his head towards Gustylyov: "Are you one of his crowd?"

"No," Bauman laughed. "I'm neither a *Rabocheye Delo* man, nor an Economist. Ever heard of the *Iskra*?"

"I've heard talk of it," Kozuba replied, screwing up his left eye obviously from force of habit, "but I'm not very clear about it. To tell you the truth it's difficult to understand you people. You all talk different languages. Are you going to be here long?"

"That depends," Bauman looked at Gustylyov's scowling face and smiled. "Meanwhile let's go and talk with the men. Have you any sort of equipment?"

"What we've got is not just anything. We've got a jellygraph!" Irina said proudly. "It's with me. In one night I can run off a hundred, even two hundred copies."

## *Chapter X*

## THE DRYING SHED

Instead of the nine men (subtract two from eleven) that Gustylyov had calculated on his abacus, there were almost a hundred waiting in the drying shed. Syoma anxiously explained to Kozuba that though he had tried to pass the word round secretly, the men had found out for themselves and had, as it were, forced their way in.

But he did not see any harm in it, for all the men here were reliable.

This was a surprise to Kozuba. But still more surprising was the appearance of Taras and Vasili among them. The police had not detained them. What is more, the manager had even promised to forget their "audacity" and to keep them on at the mill if they would accept the new rates and give their word not to incite the workers.

"I gave them my word," Taras laughed. "But a little word's not going to stop the tide. In an affair like this you need cunning just as you do in wars and you have to know how to fool the enemy."

Bauman began his speech by pointing to the release of Taras and Vasili as clear evidence that the mill-owner was afraid of a show-down. And when he explained to the workers the reasons for this fear their faces brightened for the first time. It did indeed look as though Proshin would concede if they were to strike.

Naturally, it was rather terrifying having to take the decision: the Proshin Mill had never had a strike. It was rather frightening having to stop the machines with their own hands. They provided some sort of earnings, though the workers were all half-starved.

"By the look of things he should give way. But what if he didn't? What if he really were to close down the mill?"

But these conjectures were rejected the minute they were made. Never for a moment would Proshin forfeit his own interests and allow some other manufacturer to rake in the big money. He would never let the government contract go to someone else. That would go against the grain with any factory-owner.

"What if he calls the Cossacks out again? The old man didn't bring the governor along for nothing: it was to show us that the general is backing him up."

The young men laughed.

"He didn't have to show us that: it's common knowledge! The Morozov workers sang a long time ago:

*It's the money-bags that have the power today,*
*And there's nobody more powerful than they.*

"Wait a minute! What are you going to use for money? People have to eat while there's a strike. You don't think he'll give in right away, do you? He'll kick a bit, if only for form's sake."

But here, too, a solution was quickly found: the fact was that from one pay-day to the next the workers always lived "in advance." They had just received their wages, so there was enough money to last them a week. To make sure, Syoma suggested that in the morning they should go to the factory shop and lay in as much "in advance" as possible: they had always been given credit before and he was sure the shop would give them twice as much credit if Proshin was afraid of disputes. They could use their ready cash to buy stocks of food from the market as well.

"Why from the market?" Irina interrupted. "We'll buy the food wholesale and then distribute it. That way it will be cheaper. Isn't that right, Comrade Rook? And we'll see that the children are cared for and fed."

The idea of buying food wholesale and looking after the children pleased the men. Most of those at the meeting were young and unmarried, but they realized that for the family men it would be a great help.

"If that's the way we're going to do it, then the money, too, should go into a common pool."

"Naturally: a strike fund. We'll all contribute."

"And we'll help," Bauman added. "I've brought some money with me. And the other mills will support you. The Party will take care of that. Every action against the capitalists is a matter for all the workers, and all must

give it their support, from the Committee members to the rank and file."

It was decided not to delay with the preparations in the barracks and workers' settlement. All caution had to be used to prevent the mill spies from getting wind of what was taking place before the workers were ready, and reporting them to the "powers that be." Bauman was to leave for the district centre the following day to call out the Morozov and Konshin workers; Kozuba would give him introductory notes and tell him who to talk with. There were Social-Democratic Party organizations at the Morozov and Konshin mills. True they were small groups, but they did exist.

Bauman undertook to arrange for strikes to be called simultaneously at all three mills.

But the Proshin workers protested.

"Why all together?" they asked. "Why should we wait for the Morozov workers? No, we thought of it first, and we want to be the first. They can follow our lead. They are big factories and it will take at least two days to get that lot moving. You can't get things started quickly there. But we'll have everything ready in a day: talk to the men, get stores of food, and the day after tomorrow, when the whistle blows, we'll stop work, call a meeting and elect a strike committee and the leadership."

Everything went smoothly until they arrived at the question of the leadership. Then all eyes turned to Bauman. Kozuba, who was their senior and undoubtedly the most respected man among them, spoke for all when he said:

"Just a minute. What about the leadership if you're going away? Who will be chairman of the strike committee?"

"You."

"Me?" Kozuba jumped out of his seat in surprise.

There was a murmur of sympathetic support among the workers.

"Why not?" Bauman asked, laughing. "I'm quite sure you can do it."

"You think so?" Kozuba said slowly. "It's a responsible job, you know. In plain words, it's a political job. Can you see me as a politician?"

"It's a political job, true enough," Bauman nodded. "But the strike will show your abilities in that direction."

Kozuba screwed up his eyes and said nothing.

"See you don't let us down, grandpa!" Vasili said, slapping Kozuba on the back. "D'you think you'll tame the bear?"

Gustylyov listened, obviously put out. He had been pushed into the background at the meeting. The men had listened to Bauman with such interest that Gustylyov had realized it was hopeless to speak in opposition to him. He had not spoken, too, because he believed the strike would be unsuccessful and thought it would be of advantage to give the *Iskra* man a free hand in what he was sure was a hopeless cause. When the whole affair collapsed, and the starving, desperate workers returned to work he would use it as an object lesson and denounce the *Iskra* supporters: that, he would say, is what comes of listening to the Leninists; all they ever did was to double the burden of the workers.

He spoke only once, just to prepare the ground for any accusations he would make later. He reminded the workers—"I am not objecting to the strike, but I would just like to mention one thing"—police reprisals would follow their action. There had never been a strike without arrests.

But the men understood him in a way that offended him. Those who attended his study circle sat with downcast eyes as though they felt uncomfortable at the way their organizer and leader was talking, while the rest were at a loss to know what that white-livered bookkeeper was doing at the meeting at all.

One of the younger men did not mince his words:

"Arrests? What of it? You can't have a war without casualties. We're going in with our eyes open. And anyone who's afraid can clear out right now."

Gustylyov swallowed the insult—this was not the time to show his hand! It was all right for Bauman to go on with the business; he was here illegally. But he, Gustylyov, saw no reason why he should get involved in illegal work, particularly as he favoured only the legal party.

For that reason he had kept silent and said no more at the meeting.

## *Chapter XI*

## A NIGHT'S LODGING

It goes without saying that Bauman did not return to spend the night with his old comrade-in-exile. Neither did Gustylyov invite him, although only four years ago they had been arrested together for participation in the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class* and exiled to the same sleepy little town of Orlov, Vyatka Gubernia, not to be found on every map. There they did not tire of seeing each other every day, but now they could not keep a conversation going for even half an hour.

Kozuba realized this for himself. He had had a word in Gustylyov's ear at the meeting, and as soon as dusk fell he sent a man to his house for Bauman's suit-case.

When the meeting broke up and the workers dispersed

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* The *League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class* was organized by V. I. Lenin in 1895 in St. Petersburg. The League was the embryo of the revolutionary workers' party in Russia and worked to combine Marxism with the working-class movement.—*Ed.*

conspirator fashion, singly and in pairs, Bauman turned his thoughts to the subject of where he would spend the night. Kozuba settled the matter in two words. He shook hands with Gustylyov and, turning to Bauman, said:

"Come on!"

These were Kozuba's favourite words. And for an excellent reason, too: they were good words.

Bauman, too, shook hands with Gustylyov, and only after that asked:

"What about the suit-case?"

"It's at my place," Kozuba replied.

And they went off together.

Kozuba lived in one room in a dilapidated little house on the outskirts of the factory township: beyond lay the open country. The night was dark and the bluish snow crunched underfoot, reminding Bauman of how he had crossed the frontier.

Kozuba talked all the way home, telling Bauman about local affairs and people. He talked sparingly, but what he said was to the point, and the more he talked, the more Bauman became aware that he was just the man needed to lead workers as yet ignorant and half-peasant, like the weavers at the local mill. Bauman said as much, quite bluntly.

They were just then entering the living room. Kozuba stopped Bauman at the door and walked into the darkness alone.

"We're a bit crowded here," he warned. "Just wait while I light the lamp, otherwise you'll break something or hurt yourself."

A match flared up and there was a tinkle of glass. Kozuba lit the lamp. He turned to his guest and, in the flickering light of the flame just turning yellowish, scrutinized him affectionately:

"So you think I'm the right man? Are you sure you're not making a mistake? I, for instance, did make a

mistake: in the beginning I took you for somebody else. I looked at your collar, tie, shoes—well, thought I... But put to the test you proved to be..."

"What?" Bauman asked with a laugh.

The flame was now high in the lamp, brightly lighting up the room. Bauman looked round and again rejoiced in his luck: he had most certainly found the right man. The quarters were so small that there was hardly any elbow room: between the white wooden table and the big, awkward bed was his suit-case which together with two stools filled all the remaining space. Yes, the room was small and humble, but it was pleasant and clean with that particular cleanliness that is achieved only when people tidy up for themselves and not for the purpose of display. Undoubtedly this Kozuba was a decent sort.

Was he alone, here?

No. On the bed, her plaits lying over the pillow, was a woman. She had pulled the blanket up to her chin.

"Good evening," she said. "Just turn your back and I'll get up and get the samovar going."

"That's the idea!" Kozuba encouraged, and explained although it was quite clear without any explanation: "My old woman. Sit down. We'll have some tea."

"No, no!" Bauman waved his hand. "It's too late!"

But the bed was already creaking and the woman was quickly getting up.

"No tea, when a guest arrives?" Kozuba said firmly. "It won't take long. My Nyura's an expert. She'll have the samovar boiling in no time. Tea has never harmed anyone."

"No one has ever choked over tea in Russia," Nyura confirmed, dropping chips into the body of the samovar. "Here, hand me the matches, Kozuba."

Kozuba gave his wife the matches and pushed a stool towards Bauman.

"To tell you the truth I thought Gustylyov would be chosen for the leadership. But you've gone and pushed me forward, a non-Party man!"

Bauman knitted his brows; evidently this was a distasteful subject, but he answered immediately:

"Here is what you have to bear in mind: there's really no Party as yet, we're still only organizing it. So far there's not even one way of thinking and people often pass themselves off as Party members without actually having any right to do so. Secondly, although the most revolutionary people, whose loyalty to the workers' cause is beyond question, are joining or at least, should join the Party, that does not in any way mean that among the non-Party people there are no men able to devote their lives to the revolution, to the working class."

"You're quite right!" Kozuba nodded. "That is what I always tell the men. I tell them not to listen to Gustylyov, he's not a worker."

"Just a minute, Kozuba!" Bauman said, raising an admonishing finger. "I'm not a worker myself."

"You're different," Kozuba said with a quiet smile. "Better tell me this: I'm very interested to know if you're always such a cheerful fellow."

Bauman shook with laughter and, sitting on the floor, began untying his suit-case.

"Always."

"Why?"

Bauman shrugged his shoulders. The laughter went out of his eyes.

"Because I know I'm following the right path in life."

"The right path?" Kozuba's brows drew sharply together. "Why do you think it's right? Did you hit upon it by yourself?"

Bauman straightened up over the suit-case which now lay open.

"No. Lenin helped me."

"Lenin?" Kozuba murmured, averting his gaze. "You've mentioned that name several times in the drying shed—Lenin, Lenin.... Does he really know where the truth lies on earth and how to find it, this Lenin of yours? As far as I'm concerned I don't know where to begin."

Bauman moved aside the clothes in the suit-case and pulled out a batch of newspapers. They were all copies of the *Iskra*. On top was a copy of the fourth issue. Bauman held it out to Kozuba, opened it and pointed with his finger.

Screwing up his eyes, Kozuba read the bold, clear head-line:

WHERE TO BEGIN?

He grinned.

"That's grand! It's a miracle! We'll read them. Are they all for us?" he asked eagerly, watching Bauman put the pile of papers on the table. "That's fine! You'd never believe how we're starved for the truth at the mill. The men snatch every leaflet before you can read it." He caught Bauman's anxious eye and burst into laughter. "Don't worry about the wife. She's one of us. She can't read or write, but she understands everything. Nyura, hide these away for the time being."

He bent over Bauman's shoulder and what he saw in the suit-case made him whistle.

"If they catch you with all that, you're in for two penal servitudes!"

Bauman smiled and closed the suit-case.

"There's a way out of penal servitude, too."

Nyura placed the samovar on the table. It was old and lop-sided, but shone brightly.

"Have you made an escape already?"

"Yes, I escaped from exile."

"That means you've been to gaol?"

"In the Peter and Paul Fortress, the prison in St. Petersburg, on an island."

"Were you there long?"

"A little under two years."

"And you were cheerful all that time?"

Bauman laughed again.

"Did you expect me to cry?"

Kozuba shook his head.

"You're a strange man. I've never seen your like before. There's no harder life than yours. Why, at any moment you can be pounced on and put in chains. In your shoes I'd be afraid to breathe. What are you laughing at?"

Bauman continued laughing.

"Finish your tea and let's go to bed. Otherwise I feel you might run away any minute."

## *Chapter XII*

## THE STRIKE

The purple letters Irina had traced on the jellygraph were not very legible, but they could be made out quite easily:

*DEMANDS OF THE PROSHIN MILL WORKERS*

1. Cancellation of wage cuts by the owner and an increase of three kopeks per ruble.
2. A 24-kopek pay for women and day workers.
3. A ten-hour working day.
4. A casualty room at the mill, or else at least one bed at the local hospital.
5. Labour protection as provided by law.
6. No heavy work for juveniles, which undermines their health.
7. The dismissal from the management of the persons named in a special list, against whom the majority of workers have protested.

8. The other demands are in line with those put forward by all workers in other industries.

The points looked somewhat crude, but Kozuba had purposely recorded in the resolution of the general meeting not only the actual demands put forward by the workers who spoke, but also the wording they used. Maybe it was clumsily worded, but then, each would feel he had made his contribution to the common task, the general decision.

Vasili and Taras had suggested the last point to show that the Proshin weavers were striking to win better conditions for all workers. It called forth no argument.

Although Kozuba had promised Bauman to postpone their strike for two days to give the Morozov workers time to come out, he was unable to restrain the younger workers at the meeting, especially Taras. They declared they wanted to be the first to strike and insisted on calling the strike without delay. Kozuba had been careful not to oppose them for fear of putting them off altogether. If he did it might cool them. It had not been easy to get the Proshin workers to decide to strike. True, no one had ventured to speak openly against the proposal, but the men had been sullen and reticent, the women had sighed and the old men had groused. For a long time Kozuba hesitated to put the matter to the vote. Only when the crowd filling the yard was moved by the news Gustylyov brought that the entire mill management had fled, did it become clear that there would be no more wavering: matters had come to a head, the fight had begun and it was too late to retreat.

The strike committee with Kozuba at its head was elected unanimously, and the spirits of the workers rose when it was announced that a fund was being organized and that they would get some strike pay for the duration of the strike.

They had managed to get in stores of food from the factory shop and had five days in which to wait calmly for developments. Five days was a long time; never in their lives had these workingmen been accustomed to looking far ahead. The meeting broke up with songs.

The news that the Morozov and Konshin workers were out arrived the following day. The outlook was very encouraging. It was great to be marching not alone, but shoulder to shoulder!

## *Chapter XIII*

## "WHO ARE YOU WAITING FOR, MY FINE FELLOW?"

Evening was setting in.

Mikhalchuk shivered and stamped his feet on the high road about half a *verst* from the lane leading to the Proshin Mill.

Twilight comes quickly in the winter-time. Every moment the impenetrable haze grew denser round the birch trees beyond the snow-drifts on the high road; the hollows in the distance grew blacker and blacker. The longer he waited the more he had to strain his eyes to peer into the gathering gloom. He expected to see the outlines of galloping horses on the winding ribbon of the roadway.

He was uneasy and downhearted. He had never expected the mill-owners—Morozov, Konshin, and Proshin—to give in to the workers. The manager had said that the time was unfavourable; a strike at this moment, he said, would prevent them getting some big contract. It had almost been transferred to the Lodz mill. He had never seen the workers so jubilant. It was indescribable! Kozuba was the hero of the hour. It must have been the devil himself who had tempted him, Mikhalchuk, to

blunder into taking sides with the employer. The men would jeer at him now and most likely drive him out of the mill.

True, the manager had said that in time everything would return to normal; wages would be cut and the old order restored. Mikhalchuk realized that difficult times lay ahead. He doubted whether the old order would really return. Passing through the settlement these days, now that the strike had been won, you could hardly recognize the mill workers. They seemed to be quite different people.

Mikhalchuk was so absorbed in his thoughts that he did not observe three men coming up behind him from the direction of the mill. When the men saw Mikhalchuk they signed to one another to slow down. He turned only when the nearest of the three men gripped him by the shoulder.

"Who are you waiting for, my fine fellow?"

Mikhalchuk, taken by surprise, lost his balance. He was about to clench his heavy fists but the moment he saw he was only one against three, he knew it would be madness to fight. It was Yegor Nikiforov who had him by the shoulder. He was famous throughout the district for his strength. When the mill workers arranged team fights with the townsfolk there was no one to match Nikiforov in the town; nor in Moscow for that matter. The second worker was Taras. The third man, in workmen's clothes, was a stranger to Mikhalchuk. Had he ever seen him anywhere he would have remembered him: the man's eyes were very striking—they were so clear. There was also a small scar on his nose—a blemish that would not have escaped his notice.

Taras spoke to the stranger very respectfully in a low voice:

"You go on slowly, comrade: straight along this path. We'll catch you up in a moment, after we've had a little talk with this..."

Clear eyes studied Mikhalchuk attentively.

"No," the stranger replied, "we'd better all talk to him. What's up anyway?"

"What's up?" Nikiforov said. "Oh, nothing much really." He bent his head close to Mikhalchuk. "Did you hear? Who are you waiting for, I'm asking you?"

Mikhalchuk drew his head into his shoulders like a tortoise, and looked askance at Nikiforov and the stranger:

"Let me go!" he muttered between his teeth. "Who've I got to wait for? I was just out for a walk."

"A walk?" Yegor jeered, tightening his grip, so that Mikhalchuk felt the steel fingers through his coat. "A young lady out promenading, are you! Come on now, why did you go to Moscow the day before yesterday?"

Mikhalchuk drew his head deeper into his collar. Nikiforov released his shoulder and took off a woollen glove. Mikhalchuk's heart sank.

"I went to see my sister—she's ill," he said in little more than a whisper, his eyes closed.

"She's getting treatment at the police station, I suppose? You were seen going to the police, you Judas!"

Yegor grabbed him by the coat and pulled. Buttons and hooks dropped to the ground.

"They mistook me for somebody else," Mikhalchuk screamed hysterically. "As God's my witness! I'll swear on the sacred relics! Why should I go to the police station?"

"That's what I'd like to know," Taras said with determination. "Confess, you toad's liver, who did you betray? Your face tells me you betrayed someone. You've got nothing to say? All right, Yegor, let him have it!"

"Wait!" the stranger said quickly, restraining Yegor. "That's not the way these things are done."

"How else?" Taras said grimly. "If adders are not killed, they cause trouble."

He broke off and listened. Mikhalchuk's eyes gleamed with joy. From the high road they heard the merry, dancing jingle of sleigh-bells, the snorting of horses, voices.

"The police inspector! No one else rides in a *troika*. That's who you were waiting for!"

Yegor punched Mikhalchuk straight in the face. The latter fell on his back without a sound. Taras bent over the fallen man, but the thud of hoofs was coming nearer, swiftly and menacingly. The police...

"Get a move on, Yegor! Into the woods. The horses can't follow."

Yegor kicked the motionless Mikhalchuk.

"You won't get away!" he said. "We'll finish this little talk later!"

He had only just managed to lunge through a snowdrift on the heels of his companions when the steaming horses galloped up full pelt, swerving past Mikhalchuk's body.

"Halt!" cried a raucous voice.

The coachman pulled the horses up short and a heavy bearskin rug, hastily thrown aside, cracked like a whip against the snow. A tall officer, in the blue red-banded cap of the police, jumped down. Behind him the fat inspector stretched out his legs with difficulty and prepared to heave himself out of the sleigh.

"Halt or I'll shoot!"

The police officer held a revolver in his hand, but the shadow darting into the thick woods was already hidden by the trees fringing the ditch along the high road.

"Follow the trail!"

The mounted riders, who had galloped up, spurred their horses, but the snow was deep and the beasts reared and shied.

"It's impossible to get through, your honour. There's no finding them in the woods at night. And the snow is

deep. A man might manage somehow on foot, but mounted it's impossible."

The inspector breathed loudly as he bent over the body. Mikhalchuk opened his eyes.

"He's alive, the scoundrel!" said the inspector, disappointed. "The blood's from his nose. Get up, don't play the fool! We thought they'd killed you."

"They hadn't time, your honour, otherwise..." Mikhalchuk gasped, rising unsteadily. "There's evil about, your honour. The devil brought someone from the mill to the back street just when I was entering the police station. I was seen. That's why Nikiforov nearly killed me."

"They will, too, that's certain," affirmed the inspector. "I can tell you this, they're not soft with traitors. In Orekhovo-Zuyevo they drowned two agents in a hole in the ice some days ago. Who did it? Just try and find out!"

"We go for them, and they go for us," the police captain noted and strode off towards the sleigh. "Well, it's nothing much to worry about ... what's your name?"

"Mikhalchuk," the inspector prompted.

The officer nodded.

"Naturally, you'll have to disappear from here, but we'll fix you up in Moscow. And we'll dig out some other name for you: they like circulating names like yours, for everyone's information. You'll be, let's say, not Mikhalchuk, but Mikhalin. A hair-cut and shave, and your own mother won't recognize you!"

Mikhalchuk grinned broadly.

"I'm most grateful to you, your honour."

"That's it," the captain said patronizingly. "A prayer to the Lord and a service to the Tsar is never overlooked. As for this Nikiforov, we'll deal with him as we would with any other insect. We'll crush him underfoot. Was he alone?"

"No," Mikhalchuk said hurriedly. "Taras Prokhorov was with him, and another—not a local man."

"Not a local man?" the captain pricked up his ears. "Tsk, tsk, tsk! Wait, Fyodor," he said, stopping the coachman, who was about to drive on. "Do you remember his face?"

He turned back the skirt of his greatcoat, pulled a wallet from his pocket, and from the wallet—a photograph.

"Ilya Petrovich, a match, please. Well, do you recognize him?"

In the weak, flickering light Mikhalchuk saw a snapshot of a young man with a short beard, wearing a light coat and felt hat pulled low over his forehead; the eyes and nose were blurred. The man was carrying two suit-cases.

"No, your honour. That's not the man."

"He must be," the police captain said sternly. "We have definite information that he's here, in the district. He was seen at the Morozov and Proshin mills. He, and no other, is the ringleader, I'll stake my life on it. Look again. Ilya Petrovich, another match!"

Again a light flickered over the photograph. It was quiet in the woods. The horses snorted. Should he recognize him? Should he say that this was the man? They might wear him down later with questions for not having said anything about him before.

"No, I never saw that man."

"Never saw him!" the officer mocked. "Simpleton!"

"The woods lead to the railway line," the inspector said anxiously. "They can reach the station while we're wasting time here. Do you think we should go there? Mikhalchuk can keep an eye open at the township."

Mikhalchuk's face twitched with alarm at the thought. Were they going to leave him here alone? Not if he could help it!

"No, your honour. They couldn't have gone to the station. They hadn't any luggage. They were following

me, I'll swear. I'm only afraid they'll reach the settlement before us and give the warning."

"The infernal... He's probably right," the captain frowned. "Climb on to the runner," he ordered. "You'll do the round of the houses with us. You've no need to conceal yourself now; you can show your true colours. All right, Fyodor!"

The coachman flapped the reins. The bells jingled merrily. The outriders spurred their horses to a gallop to keep up with the inspector's elegant sleigh.

## *Chapter XIV*

## THE PRINTSHOP

Irina's heart sang as she entered her room at the school. In spite of her anxiety, Bauman had been seen off safely.

He was going to avoid the local siding and take a train at the next station. She, Kozuba, and everyone with whom he had come into contact had wanted to accompany him to the station.

"Rook—herald of spring!" Every time she thought of it a happy smile lit up her face.

But they had decided to be careful. They would have been bad conspirators if they had all gone. Taras and Nikiforov had been sent with him to guard against any unforeseen eventuality.

Syoma had taken the suit-case by a different route; it was empty; all the literature had been distributed in the district.

And the district? Not many days had passed since that hour on Sunday. Yet the district had changed out of all recognition! She had never thought the people here were so wonderful. For years they had been neighbours but had never taken much notice of each other. The place

had seemed dull and uninteresting. And how splendid the lads had been when put to the test! She had known Syoma for two years. They belonged to the same political study circle and she had always thought him just another ordinary young man. And now... Bauman had given him just a little twist—and he had become a different person.

Gustylyov had been offended. Not only Kozuba, but even Syoma and Taras had put him in the shade. He talked of moving to Moscow. There were still many like him there—sticking in the mud, Bauman had said.

Irina pulled the kerchief from her head and looked at herself in the mirror.

"Oh, what a sight!" she thought.

She tidied her hair and went to the chest of drawers standing against the opposite wall. It was a remarkable chest of drawers. Everything in the room bore the stamp of the poorly-paid schoolmistress. Irina's salary was just enough to keep body and soul together; how could she afford decent furniture? Bed, table, book-shelf, washstand, and a mirror—that was all. In half an hour it could all have been loaded on to a cart. Everything was shabby and cheap, except the chest of drawers which was bulky, large, and of costly mahogany. No doubt a merchant's bride had once kept her dowry in it.

Irina sang as she moved across to the chest of drawers. At that moment an old woman entered without knocking. She was very modestly dressed, and wore a black lace mantilla on her grey hair.

"Why have you begun to come home so late?" she sighed with a shake of her head. "You seem to forget you have a home. It is unbecoming for a girl. No one will want to marry such a restless creature."

Irina laughed, moved away from the chest of drawers and gave the old woman a gentle squeeze.

"You don't understand the tiniest bit, Mother dear. Don't worry. Everything is simply wonderful! And I keep

away because I have heaps of work to do. Heaps and heaps."

She turned her mother by the shoulders and guided her to the door.

"And now I have to prepare for tomorrow as quickly as I can."

At the threshold she kissed the old woman and opened the door.

"Won't you have something to eat?" her mother pleaded. "You haven't had dinner?"

"No." Irina confessed. "And I'm as hungry as a hunter. Will you warm it, Mummy. Only bring it here, would you? I'm so busy. I'll eat it while I'm working."

The old woman sighed heavily, and went out shaking her head. Irina locked the door after her and, returning to the chest of drawers, pulled out the lower drawer. It was empty, except for a pair of old stockings that had been darned over and over again. She carefully lifted out the false bottom and from beneath it took out a package of thin paper, a stencil with words scratched on it, a cardboard frame, and rollers. She adjusted the frame round the stencil, put a sheet of paper under it, dipped a roller into some ink—the colour was a pale purple (no matter how she tried she could never obtain a darker colour more like printer's ink)—and rolled it across the stencil. She quickly drew out the printed leaflet and spread another clean sheet. The roller passed over the stencil again and another leaflet was ready.

"RUSSIAN SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC LABOUR PARTY

*Workers of All Countries, Unite!*

"TO THE WORKERS OF THE MOSCOW TEXTILE DISTRICT

COMRADES!

"Our strike has ended in victory. The capitalists have retreated before the united action of weavers and spin-

ners. It cannot be denied that the strike was a vivid example of the strength of the working class when it is well organized and marches in serried ranks. Comrades! We shall continue to maintain this solidarity now that the strike has ended. Let us make it stronger still by establishing contact with our comrades in other districts and other provinces. We have a common cause and a common class enemy. Remember, comrades, the enemy is not strong in him; only when we are disunited is he strong."

Further on the letters were blurred:

"Moroz... ow.... 82.—Autocra..."

Irina shook her head in distress and put aside the offprint. She would have to put a lot of work into this. Touching up the letters on a stencil was a painstaking job. And by morning she had to have the leaflets out. She was so anxious that the wording on the leaflets should be distinct, that they should look as though they had come from a printshop, because this was the victory leaflet Bauman had written here among the Proshin workers before going on to rally the others.

A knock sounded on the door.

"Just a minute, Mother," Irina called irritably.

There was a more imperative knock.

"Can't you wait a minute!"

Irina put the stencil on the chest of drawers and went to the door, humming to herself.

The key turned. The door was pushed from the other side but it did not open; the key had been turned twice.

"How impatient you are!" Irina laughed.

She turned the key a second time and, with her shoulder pressed firmly against the door, she opened it a little, stretching her hand through the narrow opening.

"Give me the plate. I shan't let you in. I have my secrets."

But enormous-looking hairy fingers seized her arm in a vice above the elbow. There was a sudden push and

the door opened wide, striking Irina a painful blow on the shoulder.

"Well, we'll see what your secrets are, young lady."

The police captain, tall and wiry, with a waxed moustache did not immediately release the girl's arm. Several policemen crowded in after him, and behind them was the familiar, hateful face of Mikhalchuk.

"Is this the girl?" The captain nodded towards Irina, his eye on Mikhalchuk.

"Yes." The face bobbed up for a second and then disappeared behind the backs of the policemen.

The captain turned towards the chest of drawers and immediately saw the stencil and rollers.

"What a haul!" he said in a satisfied tone of voice. "A complete printshop, one might say."

He swaggered up to the chest of drawers and unhurriedly pointed with his finger.

"Quite good. I've never seen anything like this before. Did you invent the improvement yourself?"

Irina rubbed her arm in disgust. There was a bruise above the elbow where the policeman's fingers had insolently held her.

"Naturally," she said frigidly.

"You should be an engineer," the captain nodded approvingly.

"I shall," Irina agreed.

The captain burst into laughter, throwing back his head and displaying his prominent Adam's apple over the blue collar. "It's a woman's job to keep house and be a good wife to her husband. And as you are probably aware the imperial law does not permit women to be engineers."

"Then I shan't be an engineer under the empire," Irina said, shrugging her shoulders. "Not now, but in a few years' time, when the empire... ugh!"

The policemen wandered round the room. Jingling his skeleton keys, the fat police sergeant unlocked the table drawer and hauled out exercise-books, paper and letters. A frown flitted over Irina's brow. The letters were not dangerous—just letters from her friends and acquaintances, but all the same it was repulsive to think that strange, filthy tsarist police eyes would read them.

One man yanked out some copies of the *Iskra* from under the mattress. So that's where they were! How could she have forgotten where she had put them? What with the victory of the strike and Bauman's departure, her head had been in a whirl. And Bauman had particularly warned her to clear everything out—to hide all illegal literature—saying that even if no arrests were made the police would certainly raid homes.

The captain counted the newspapers slowly. When he finished, he had a wry smile on his face.

"A printshop. A store of *Iskra* literature. Propaganda under the guise of a Sunday school. I believe you also teach in a Sunday school, Miss? And in your school, though, I admit I've never visited it, I know you weren't teaching about the greatness of the Romanovs. You know what all this looks like, my dear young lady? Penal servitude."

Irina said nothing. Evidently she had to get some things together. Should she ask what she would be allowed to take with her to prison? Clothes, books? Certainly not books.

The captain sat at the table and drew out a sheet of white paper from his brief case.

"Protocol. Proshino. No. 47.

"I, Police Captain, Special Corps. . ."

He looked up at Irina, tall and beautiful, with her hair dressed in two plaits. He put down his pen.

"How did you get mixed up in this, young lady? You're so young. And your mother is such a kind woman."

Yes. Mother. Why wasn't she in the room? Had they kept her out? Was she arrested, too? Had she, perhaps, kept away on purpose?

The captain took up his pen again. He wrote out the protocol in fine, compact handwriting—what, where and how everything had been found. The policemen stood silently along the wall. Mikhalchuk had gone. He had done what was required of him, betrayed her, and had vanished. He felt some shame, it seemed. Was he ashamed of his profession or only of her? Last year he had come to her to borrow money. His sister had been ill. He had pleaded so much, he had even wept. It had been very difficult for her to help; her salary was not enough for two. But she had given all the same. While he...

The captain stopped writing, took a wallet from his pocket, and from the wallet—a photograph.

"Did you get the *Iskra* from this bandit?"

Bauman! Wearing a soft felt hat, smiling, tall and carrying the suit-cases! It was a snapshot. And what a good one, too!

She almost smiled at the thought. But the captain was watching her closely and her lips and eyes gave no sign.

"I don't know the man."

The captain watched her steadily.

"Don't deny it. We've arrested him here, in the township. There's no reason to believe you were not in contact. I'm asking you for your own good. A hardened criminal like that fine gentleman could have easily involved you, who are young and inexperienced. We're taking all that into consideration, you know. A frank confession can help you and even to a considerable extent keep you out of serious trouble."

"Watch out for yourself, not me!" Irina said sharply over her shoulder as she turned her back on the policeman. "In the end you'll be the loser, not I. May I pack my things?"

She went to the mirror and picked up a little hat from the dressing table. She heard her mother weeping quietly and brokenly on the other side of the wall behind the mirror. Irina shrank into herself, pained at the thought; her lips trembled and she knit her brows. Then she rapped on the wall with her knuckles and called gently:

"Mother darling, don't... Good-bye!"

## *Chapter XV*

## THE CHIEF OF POLICE

The drummers, forming the front ranks of the band, which headed a battalion of the Semyonov Life-Guard Regiment, came level with the gloomy building of the Ministry for the Interior. Every military unit passing the building had to salute His Excellency, the Minister for the Interior and Chief of Police, whether he was in his office or not. The bandmaster wheeled sharply round and, walking backwards, raised his white-gloved hand and waved his baton. The band sent the pompous, vainglorious, provocative strains of the *Semyonov March* blaring through the frosty air from all the brass of its huge silvered trumpets and clashing cymbals. The grey ranks stiffened; glistening bayonets pointed skywards; there followed the sound of measured tramping.

"Left, left! One, two..."

. . . . . .

Behind his massive, carved oak desk the Minister wearily raised his eyes from the thin printed sheets lying in front of him. He was annoyed. The march the band had begun to play outside his window was inopportune and out of place. It had snapped his train of thought. He had had matters "of state importance" on his mind—what other thoughts would a Minister have? Now that he could

not recall his thoughts, the value of his loss was magnified. The matter may even have been of decisive importance to his Tsar and country!

A police superintendent, standing deferentially beside an armchair, took his cue from his superior's irritation. He scowled and cast disapproving eyes at the curtained window behind which the buglers were blaring, and drowning his report. The Minister noticed the superintendent's scowl and moved his brows in approval. A subordinate should always mirror the mood of his chief. He must be the perfect image, but at the same time, only a shadow.

. . . . . .

"Left! Left! One, two..."

. . . . . .

The column marched past. The band stopped playing. Only a muffled roll of drums came from the distance. But the thoughts would not return.

"Be good enough to continue," the Minister growled jerkily. "You were saying that these gentlemen are gathering for a conference in Kiev?"

The superintendent nodded and clicked his spurs smartly.

"Just so, Your Excellency. Our agents believe that Krokhmal, a Kiev barrister, known as 'Handsome' in Social-Democratic Party circles..."

"Is it only a nickname, or is he really handsome?" the Minister asked, raising his head.

He straightened his drooping shoulders and protruded his lips to show what he thought a handsome man should look like. The superintendent hastily nodded, a smile gathering in his eyes.

"Judging from his photograph (he hasn't been arrested yet), he is quite good looking," he said lightly. "This Krokhmal, allow me to report, went to Moscow to talk over the organization of the conference..."

"What exactly did he talk about?"

"Unfortunately," the superintendent spread out his hands, "our information is based entirely on external observation. Krokhmal is under surveillance. Unlike the others, he is no conspirator; he is quite careless about his movements."

His Excellency smiled.

"Handsome men," he said, "are careless by nature."

The superintendent laughed loudly to show how much he appreciated the ministerial jest; but not even in this moment of intimacy did he infringe upon the respect due to his superior.

"Precisely, Your Excellency! As I was saying, the conference..."

"This conference," the Minister interrupted him, "is it about the undertaking Lenin spoke about abroad?"

The superintendent blinked in alarm.

"I beg your pardon, I don't quite understand. It is about..."

"About Lenin's declaration of open and decisive war against us. You've no doubt seen this," said the Minister, drawing a blunt, square finger nail down the margin of a newspaper lying before him and leaving a deep scratch on it. "Here—I suppose you've read this newspaper. Incidentally, it has only just been brought to my notice although it was issued in May last year. It's absolutely outrageous! What do we pay foreign agents for?"

The superintendent hastily adjusted his pince-nez. Again this *Iskra*! Who the devil could have shoved it under the Minister's nose?

"Here, read aloud from this paragraph where it talks about sending agents to Russia. These Socialists write in such a way that I must confess I can't immediately grasp it all."

The superintendent cleared his throat.

"From here? '... a network of local agents of a united party, agents who are in live contact with each other, who know the general state of affairs... This network of agents will form the skeleton of precisely the organization we need, namely, one that is sufficiently wide to embrace the whole country...'"

"Did you note that?" the Minister raised an admonitory finger. "The whole country!"

"'... sufficiently wide and many-sided to effect a strict and detailed division of labour; sufficiently tried and tempered to be able unswervingly to carry on *its own* work under all circumstances, at all "turns" and in all contingencies; sufficiently flexible to be able to avoid open battle against an enemy of overwhelming strength, when he has concentrated all his forces at one spot, and yet able to take advantage of the awkwardness of this enemy...'"

The Minister's trembling lips formed into a sneer. The superintendent's breathing grew laboured.

"Why have you stopped? Continue, Your Excellency!"

"'... and to attack him whenever and wherever least expected.'"

The Minister put his hand over the text, to signify that the reading was at an end.

"It's a formal declaration of war. What? Strategic deployment, so to speak."

"Strategic deployment?" The superintendent curled his lip contemptuously. "You shower too much honour on them. A handful of men throwing down the gauntlet..." he raised his heavily-silvered epaulets proudly, "to the greatest and strongest empire in the world!"

The Minister averted his eyes and absently moved a heavy paper-weight: a silver bear on a marble pedestal.

"Yes, of course. But bear in mind that a handful is not dangerous when it is alone. But when trouble starts,

like the Obukhov events, armed uprisings of the workers, unrest at the Baltic Shipbuilding Yards, and strikes all over the place involving tens of thousands strikers, then they are no longer a handful! And now that the *Iskra* agents are dispersed all over Russia..."

"They will all assemble in Kiev, as I have had the honour to report," the superintendent said ingratiatingly. "Once there we shall see that they don't slip through our fingers." He made a motion with his hand and a clicking sound with his tongue, in good imitation of a mousetrap.

But the Minister did not look at him.

"Have you so much confidence in Superintendent Novitsky? He is in charge of the secret police in Kiev, you know. Are you sure that he will not overlook this conference?"

"Quite sure!" the superintendent exclaimed, and went so far as to raise a deprecatory hand. "He is a very efficient, loyal officer. And, as I have already had the honour to report, thanks to Krokhmal's carelessness several persons with whom he is in contact, including agents from abroad are now under surveillance. For instance, in Moscow he met Bauman..."

At the mention of that name the Minister gave the superintendent a stern look.

"The one who gave us the slip in the textile district? So you have arrested this Bauman? At last! But I do not recall your reporting it to me."

"He was seen in Vilnius," the superintendent mumbled, "but again shook off our agents. But that is of no consequence. He met Krokhmal—that we have established—and will certainly be in Kiev. Novitsky will take care of him. The superintendent has a mortal grip."

"If Novitsky rounds up this conference," the Minister mused aloud, "I shall petition His Majesty to allow him to take complete charge of the *Iskra* case. The government attaches special importance to it and his ca-

reer will consequently be assured. Take that into account, Superintendent, and act. This infection must be torn out by its roots. We shall not be sparing with money for the search. We can draw on the secret fund—on the fund earmarked for expenditures about which His Majesty is cognizant. As this fund is never audited and no balance sheets have to be produced, there will be no restrictions."

A pleased, avaricious light shone in the superintendent's eyes.

"If we have the money—everything will be done, Your Excellency. You may rest assured concerning Kiev. Novitsky will not blunder; I shall see to the matter personally. The trap will close in good time."

## *Chapter XVI*

## THE KIEV AFFAIR

The trap did indeed close. As he neared the house in which the fourth session of the conference was to take place, Bauman, who was half an hour late, at once felt the excitement that always precedes the surrounding of an area by the secret police. Typical police agents could be seen among the hurrying pedestrians on the pavements. Care-takers in clean aprons with large brass badges pinned to their breasts were on duty at the gates. Then, there were far too many waiting sledges for such a quiet back street. And the fact that the drivers were not soliciting passengers but obviously waiting for something showed that they formed part of the police forces concentrated here, where the secret service was about to strike its next blow.

Bauman realized the danger at a glance. The enemy was acting almost openly; he was showing his hand as always happened at the last moment, prior to breaking into some house where the people he intended arresting

were assembled. Every second was precious. There was not a moment to lose. He had to warn the conference at all costs. There might yet be time to disperse, although the house was surrounded by police spies. At any rate he had to try. An attempt though risky was better than certain, hopeless failure.

Bauman walked on nonchalantly, swinging a parcel.

The parcel had its purpose. When comrades had to work illegally a parcel could play a role that was far from indifferent. Police spies working on a trail pay particular attention to what their quarry is carrying, and correctly so, for very often what is carried is to some extent the key to the person himself. It is important to know what he has in his arms: a rocking horse for a baby, or a thick roll of paper that might be proclamations, or just a long smoked sausage.

Bauman's parcel actually did contain sausage—its outlines were distinctly visible through the wrapping. The sight of the sausage calmed the police spy, who had been looking apprehensively at Bauman. He came level with the house. Like a good conspirator, he had been keeping to the opposite side of the street in order the better to see what was going on near the house and whether the safety signal was in position. It was there: a willow twig in a bottle on the window-sill, at a window on the second floor. That meant the police had not yet broken up the meeting. Neither, evidently, were his comrades expecting a raid, for the bottle would have been removed at the first sign of danger.

He must now cross the street and slip through the entrance. This was the hardest part, because the police spies (at any rate those dotted about the pavements, not cleared of snow, and those sitting on the coachmen's boxes pretending to be drivers) could not fail to notice a chap crossing the street to the house they were surrounding. But he had to take the chance.

Bauman stepped off the pavement. Just then a policeman in a black greatcoat rushed out of the house; clutching his sword, he ran along the wall to the closed iron gates and knocked on them with the scabbard. The gates opened slightly and through them Bauman saw men in black greatcoats, and one man in the blue cap and grey coat of a police officer. He shifted his eyes to the window. The bottle was gone.

"Pass along, mister, pass along! There's nothing to see here."

Bauman had not noticed the bearded care-taker with the bass voice approaching him. At first he quite expected a hand to fall on his shoulder. But the care-taker was evidently more interested in what was going on in the street; he was looking at the entrance, the gates and the windows behind which, from the street, shadows seemed to be moving. Seemed to be, but that was all. It was impossible to see into a second-floor room from the street.

Nor was it necessary to see anything of the kind. It was clear that the arrests had been made. Fortunately for Bauman the police had been hasty. He had been only half an hour late, and he very much hoped that others had been delayed, too. Had the police been just a little more patient they would have caught the lot. Now that the safety signal had been removed, no one, except those who were careless about the rules of conspiracy, would enter the house. Bauman walked away with these thoughts crowding his mind. He did not look back. The rules of conspiracy forbid looking back in a street full of police spies, where a house is surrounded and wholesale arrests are taking place. He moved on, swinging his parcel. For all who cared to look it was quite clear that it contained a smoked sausage.

He would have to leave Kiev that same day. He would have to see to things himself. He could not rely on any

of the secret meeting places until there had been a check-up. He decided to take the night train.

The conference had come to grief. Krokhmal was a poor organizer; he had failed to bring together a third of the number that could have been assembled. There had been some angry words about this at the first meeting. As it turned out, it was all for the best. It had been a serious failure, but things could have been much worse.

Bauman reached Kreshchatik Street in the centre of Kiev by a roundabout route through lanes and back turnings, and sauntered towards his hotel in Kupechesky Gardens. There was no need to hurry now, the train would not be leaving until the evening.

In the room he packed, wrote a note, and pushed the bell. A man-servant came in and eyed the suit-case.

"Are you leaving, sir?"

"I am. Here's a telegram. Send it off and keep the change. And warn the desk clerk I need my bill in a hurry. I'm leaving on the Odessa train."

The man-servant looked at the clock.

"The train doesn't pull out till eight. You're getting ready early."

"I have some unfinished business to attend to."

. . . . . .

The man-servant hurried out, reading the telegram:

"Odessa. Ashkenazi and Co.

"Confirm purchase 480 tons wheat stop leaving today by wagon-lits to see to loading stop Kurilov."

. . . . . .

Bauman paid off the coachman in Bibikovsky Boulevard. He then walked back to Kreshchatik Street and entered a barber-shop.

"Hair-cut, monsieur? And the beard?"

The client pensively pulled at his beard as he looked in the mirror.

"Yes. To tell you the truth I'm tired of it."

"Tired of it, then we'll have it off!" the barber exclaimed. "In a trice! Yes, a beard puts years on a man!"

Bauman pondered for a moment, biting his lip, while the barber, in anticipation, ran his comb through the bushy beard. It would cost twice as much to have it off as to have it trimmed.

"If you'll permit me to say so, monsieur, you'll look well without a beard."

"You think so? All right, then. Shave it off."

The beard was off. Bauman looked ruefully at his beardless chin.

"Feels strange, somehow. The moustaches look a bit orphaned without the beard. Ugly."

This brought another cheerful exclamation from the barber. He stepped back and surveyed his client.

"Your judgement is quite right, monsieur! Would you like me to shave off the moustaches, too?"

. . . . . .

The Odessa train left at eight. But Bauman did not travel to Odessa as the hotel official who handed him his passport noted. He bought a ticket for the Kharkov train. It had left ten minutes earlier.

## *Chapter XVII*

## IN THE TRAIN

Kiev—Kharkov—Kursk—Voronezh—Gryazi—Yelets—Tula... Bauman had chosen this roundabout route to Moscow in order to confuse anyone who might be following him. Kharkov and Kursk—with the change of trains—had been passed safely. The train was now approaching Voronezh.

Policemen and railway conductors had passed through the carriage several times during the journey on the pretext of checking the tickets. Each time, spies had fur-

tively studied Bauman's face and had moved on, their eyes hidden below the battered fur caps pulled down over their foreheads. It was, indeed, all but impossible to recognize the lively, tall revolutionary with the fair beard, bushy eyebrows and clear eyes in this clean-shaven War Office official with his round narrow shoulders, sitting on the soft, grey cloth-covered seat of a second-class carriage. Recognition was out of the question because the commercial traveller working for Ashkenazi and Co. had become Oswald Meize, an official in the War Office. The black peak of his cap shaded his eyes (the eyebrows had been shaved off in the lavatory on the first lap of the journey) and a round fluffy cockade—the "tsar's gob of spittle" as it was called in the army—was fastened to the red band. Overhead, in view of the luggage rack, lay a sword with a gold-plated hilt. A shiny silver ribbon with a knot at the end hung from the hilt. The loyalty of War Office employees could not be doubted. Next to the secret service they were the most trustworthy. Judging by the man's age and the stern, compressed lips, he was a titular counsellor, no less.

He was reading the *Alarm Clock*, a humorous magazine. That was also a good sign. Doubtful characters did not read the *Alarm Clock*; it ridiculed mothers-in-law, kitchen-maids, working people, poor peasants, and petty merchants not in the guild. It was criminal to make fun of officials, landlords, and the nobility. And, naturally, the magazine made no mention of them. Politically unreliable people would not waste their time reading the *Alarm Clock.*

The *Alarm Clock*, the cap and the sword quickly dispersed the restless light in the eyes of the policeman, who peeped into the compartment over the shoulders of the conductor every time he rudely jerked open the door and sang out: "Your ticket, sir!"

A reliable person.

Of fellow-travellers there were three: an overdressed woman and her daughter, a girl of twelve, and a stout, flabby but rather handsome priest.

The woman began to talk as soon as she entered, and in half an hour Bauman knew all there was to know about her.

She owned an estate in Zadonsk Uyezd, Voronezh Gubernia. It had been in her family since the reign of Catherine the Great. They owned a wine distillery. Her husband was marshal of the nobility in the uyezd. But, naturally, they did not live in the country, not even in Voronezh, although they had a house there. They visited Voronezh from time to time, when it was imperative that they should, as on this occasion. There was to be a meeting of the nobility in Voronezh.

They lived on their estate only in the spring-time, before leaving to enjoy the season at some foreign resort. But she did not make a ritual of it. To be quite frank she never felt really happy in the country. In the old days, *comment dit-on*?, country life was idyllic. The serfs had recognized her father as their master. But now they were growing rude and more insolent every day. Not so long ago the peasants used to remove their caps when one was still half a *verst* away, but now they no longer even saluted one. Worse still, last year they had thrown a stone at her carriage. Happily it had only caught her in the back. But it might have hit her on the head. It might have caused some fatal injury, isn't that so?

Bauman readily agreed. And the baroness chattered on:

"St. Petersburg is positively the only place where one can live in Russia. Only there can one give the children an education. Cleo, my daughter. . ."

Cleo curtsied and sat down again. Her be-ribboned plaits bobbed as she moved; she held her hands decorously, palm to palm, and lowered her eyes.

Maman rewarded her with a pleased smile. The curtsy had been correct in spite of the jolting of the carriage—the train was picking up speed.

"*Voilá*! You can see for yourself that for my daughter a public school was out of the question, especially in a wretched little town like Voronezh or, for instance, Kursk. Naturally I always give credit where it is due—the Ministry of Public Education is really doing all it can to keep the common people out of the schools. But still one could never have been sure that the girl sitting next to Cleo was not some low-bred child. They do manage to worm their way in, you know. It's abominable! I cannot understand why they do it. They cannot hope for anything but the lowest positions in the army or in the civil service! To say nothing of girls! In general, a woman's place is in her home and for that schooling is quite unnecessary."

"But your daughter does attend school, doesn't she?" Bauman said, unable to hide a smile. "You are not very consistent."

"A school?" the baroness cried indignantly. "A boarding school! The only type of school where a delicately-nurtured girl can learn what she really needs to know in life. She attends Madame Truba's boarding school."

"Truba?*" Bauman asked, stifling his laughter. "Madam Truba? Is it her surname?"

"Have you not heard of her?" the baroness asked dryly, glancing suspiciously at Bauman. "Very strange for a resident in St. Petersburg! However... Perhaps you're a bachelor? That does make a difference, of course. You have no children and you do not have to spend sleepless nights thinking how to bring them up. All the same it would be well to remember: if you want

* *Truba* in Russian means trumpet.—*Tr.*

your daughter to grow into a real, ideal woman—send her to Madam Truba's. It's a private school where they teach girls everything they need in life. There they do not spoil girls with things like geometry as though they were to become land surveyors, or with algebra that is called by some very scientific name but, let us be quite frank, is not needed by anyone for anything. They teach what is really required in life; and it is all done in practice, you understand. For example, they do not simply explain how one should sit in a carriage. No. They have a real carriage in one of the classrooms, and the girls learn how to enter and leave a carriage gracefully and modestly—in a dress with a train, in a dress without a train, in a round cloak, or in a fur coat. Or, take table manners. They learn how to eat oysters, artichokes, fish of different kinds, lobsters... How to use all the seventeen different forks in all combinations at a banquet. How a table should be laid. Then there is needlework, map-drawing, music—the piano naturally—and some light instrument..."

"A guitar?" Bauman suggested.

"You're jesting, of course!" the baroness said and threw up her hands in horror. "Only a Gipsy, a Spaniard, or (Cleo, do not listen )a bad woman plays the guitar. Of course, not. The mandolin, and the concertina..."

"The zither," her daughter prompted in a whisper, making a movement with her little fingers.

"Yes, the zither," the baroness nodded. "What else? The sciences are naturally taught but only as much as is needed for *causerie.* Languages: French and English. More French. All the teaching is done in French. Even religion. Cleo, recite something really fine, something from Corneille or Racine."

Cleo recited the "really fine lines" in a nasal singsong voice, her hands folded palm to palm, like the well-

mannered child she was. At every pause she shook her be-ribboned plaits and the priest sitting in a corner by the window, grunted in approval, although he did not understand a single word.

Bauman thought the priest was a perfect match for the tight-laced baroness, in spite of the fact that at first glance he seemed to be her direct opposite in appearance and type. The woman was smart, while everything about the priest was slovenly and slack—his travelling cassock of rustling deep cherry-coloured silk, his flabby cheeks, and the long beard half-way down his chest. She fidgeted all the time, while he seldom moved his corpulent body and then only, it seemed, when he could not avoid doing so. She chattered incessantly—he had scarcely said a word during the long journey. She had a broken falsetto, he had a pleasant, deep rolling voice. She was clearly a woman of "blue blood," an aristocrat, a baroness, a society lady; he, just as obviously, could trace his family tree from deacon to sexton, from priest to priest. In short, they had nothing in common, and yet in some inexplicable way they were as much kith and kin as brother and sister.

For that reason Bauman treated them alike when they addressed him. His replies were laconic, reserved, and courteous. In illegal work one of the principal rules of conspiracy required that chance acquaintances should never be contradicted. Either make them believe that you "belong," or, which is better, keep yourself to yourself and, when spoken to, keep your answers brief.

## *Chapter XVIII*

## THE TRAP

"Voronezh!"

Bauman hastily put on his coat and red-banded cap and sat near the door, closing it after the baroness and

her daughter, who had swept out without a word of farewell! He always made himself "ready for action" before every large station, in case circumstances required that he leave the carriage hurriedly.

This stop, too, was safely coming to an end. But just as the second bell rang the sliding door of the compartment was slung back with a sharp report. It had been pushed open violently by a big, fat man in a shabby bearskin coat, who burst into the compartment. There was a hoarse whistling sound as he stopped to take a deep breath, his mouth opening wide, carp-like. He tossed a small suit-case on to the luggage shelf, and edged towards the window. He tried to make his movements seem natural, but Bauman's experienced eye saw, through the calculated efforts, that the man was trembling lest he be discovered by someone among the people on the station platform.

Bauman stood up to look over the stranger's shoulder at the platform.

There were policemen a few steps from the carriage, leaving enough room for the passengers boarding and leaving the carriage.

They were a police captain and three police sergeants. These last had a dignified bearing and flowing moustaches as befitted veteran police sergeants. In front of them, uneasily shifting his weight from one foot to another, was a thin man wearing a light, threadbare coat and bowler hat. There could be no mistake about him: he was a spy. So true to type was he that an artist could have used him for a model.

The spy was speaking excitedly and nodding in the direction of the carriage; for a moment Bauman thought he had seen the man's foxy face somewhere before, at the station in Kursk or when his ticket had been clipped on the train.

The bell sounded for the third time. Far ahead the senior conductor blew his whistle loudly. The engine gave an answering snort and the train jerked forward. Bauman watched the spy bristle like a dog encountering a wolf, and spin round like a top, as though possessed of the devil. The sergeants moved after the train, their red shoulder-straps bobbing; the captain waved a white-gloved hand and shouted something. Bauman read on his lips the words:

"Stop!"

One of the police sergeants dashed forward, his sword dangling at his side. But the train was putting on more and more speed and the rhythmic beat of the wheels grew faster and faster. The water tower flashed by and the trees fell back at a great pace. The man in the bearskin coat sighed thankfully (the sound was almost like a train whistle) and his expanded chest, broad as that of a Voronezh cart-horse, fell to normal. He threw off his coat, smoothed his belly, and blinked blissfully into the mirror in the door of the compartment as he stretched out, singing snatches from some operetta:

*If a tom-cat,*
*Oh, if a tom-cat,*
*If a tom-cat crosses the way.*
*It's a sign,*
*Oh, it's a sign,*
*That somebody dies today.*

"Do I disturb you?"

Bauman had no time to reply. The happy, flushed face in the mirror suddenly trembled. In its place, the opening made by the sliding door was filled by a narrow face, hooked nose and waxed moustaches. Next Bauman saw a blue cap with a red band, a grey greatcoat, silver shoulder-straps, and spurs. It was the police captain, the one who had stood on the station platform at Voronezh.

The bowler-hatted informer stood behind him and peeped with furtive yellow eyes under his elbow.

The police captain looked into the compartment but did not enter. Leaving the door open he stepped back into the corridor, lowered a folding chair, sat down, unhurriedly threw back the skirt of his greatcoat, drew out an initialled silver cigarette-case, turned towards the window, took a cigarette and lit it; he clearly wanted every movement and the way he sat to show his complete indifference to everything surrounding him.

This was a serious matter. The police and especially police captains did not board moving trains for the fun of it.

Holding up a newspaper, Bauman studied the fat stranger, who, when the captain appeared, had dropped heavily on to the grey seat beside the priest. He was trying to keep the fading smile on his thick lips; he crossed his legs defiantly and continued the song in an undertone:

*If a tom-cat crosses the way...*

But the gay tune sounded like a funeral dirge; the patent-leather toe of the carelessly swinging shoe trembled suspiciously. He was in a funk. That was only too self-evident. His cheek twitched convulsively. He obviously knew he was the object of the chase. Who was he? And why were the police after him? He did not look like an illegal worker, a "political." Outwardly, he was more like a small landowner, who loved the hunt and the bottle; or he could be a merchant of moderate means. But never a revolutionary—if only because he was sitting there in mortal terror. His hands were shaking. The sight of him nauseated Bauman.

What devil had prompted him to enter this compartment? The whole business could rebound against him if he were not careful and the police captain turned his attention to him.

The informer slunk past the door again; once more the thought struck Bauman that he had seen that lean, ratty face before.

The priest suddenly got up and hurried to the door. Bauman watched the fat stranger hopefully anticipating that he would shut the door. The door remained open. The captain at the window did not turn his head when the priest passed him to the lavatory on the right. He sat perfectly still, blowing blue smoke rings.

The fat stranger rose and, with his eye on the captain's back, dropped quietly into the seat close to Bauman with a lightness one could hardly have expected from such a massive frame.

"Even though you're an official, and an official from the War Office at that," he whispered, scarcely moving his lips, "I can see at once that you're a gentleman. For that reason I beg you to listen to me. Have you noticed that man in the grey and blue? Well, he's after me. I'm trapped."

The police captain's shoulders stopped moving altogether. Should he warn the fellow? No, the devil take him. But the fat stranger had noticed it himself. And he understood.

"I," he said, speaking in a still lower whisper, "I'm a member of an uyezd council. I confess I'm regarded as a red. In the council, I don't deny it, I favour a constitution. Our entire council is progressive—they all favour a constitution. At a meeting a month ago the devil in me made me blurt out: 'With all respect to the Monarch, long live the constitution.' It was after dinner. I'll make no secret of it; we were in our cups. Of course, that same night my house was searched. This police captain headed the search party. Made me sign a paper that I'd stay in town. And I, as you see, took a risk and—bungled it."

The police captain shifted his position. Then he stood up, continuing to look out of the window as before. The

uyezd councillor swallowed hard. From under his waistcoat he took out a thin magazine folded in four and covered with fine print and, shielding it with his whole body, suddenly thrust it into the pocket of Bauman's coat. That done, he immediately moved away.

"Help me, I beg you! No one will suspect you. I would have destroyed that damned paper in the lavatory, but that captain is in the way. Don't be afraid. It's the *Emancipation*; a frivolous magazine. Struve's putting it out for the liberals. Nothing against the law in it. Only it's printed abroad and therefore considered illegal. Otherwise it's all twaddle. If my house hadn't been searched..."

The fat man stopped short. The priest returned, waddling like a duck; the captain spun on his heel and followed him into the compartment.

## *Chapter XIX*

## PLAYING "CAT AND MOUSE"

The captain touched the peak of his cap with studied courtesy and sat down. He looked at the priest and at the uyezd councillor then shifted his eyes to Bauman. This stealthy movement of his eyes bore out Bauman's suspicion that it was he the captain was after; the conviction had grown while the fat councillor was telling his tale of woe. The trap was set, but naturally not for that harmless fool. It was unpleasant even to think that he could for a second have been lulled into believing the chase was for that driveller!

And the informer. Bauman now remembered seeing him in Kursk at the railway platform eating a jam tart. He could see the whole picture. The jam had dribbled down his coat, and a beggar girl in rags had been stand-

ing beside him and watching every mouthful. Both had hungry eyes—perhaps that was why he had not imagined the man was trailing him. His mind had been on other things. The informer had been in luck! Bauman now understood why he had worn a smirk on his face when he slipped past the door.

Bauman decided to put matters to the test.

He adjusted his cap, buttoned his coat, and got up. The captain looked anxious; he too raised himself a little, hurriedly putting his right hand in his pocket. A revolver? Or a whistle, which would bring in the policemen hidden somewhere in the train? Surely the captain was not taking a long journey like this with the informer as his sole companion.

Bauman moved to the window, took off his cap to calm the police captain, and sat down again, drawing his coat tightly about him.

There could be no doubt now. They would arrest him at the next station.

A timetable lay on the seat. Bauman picked it up and began turning over the pages; again he felt the captain observing him closely from under the lids which were lowered in a pretence at dozing.

Voronezh-Moscow. Bauman found what he was looking for.

Voronezh, Otrozhka, Somovo, Tresvyatskoye, Grafskaya, Belyaevo, Usman, Moskovka, Dryasgi, Pribytkovo, Gryazi... After Otrozhka it was a straight run to Gryazi. They had already passed Otrozhka. Consequently the arrest would be made in Gryazi.

They would be in Gryazi in two hours and twenty minutes. In that time he had to find a way out of this predicament.

He thrust his hands into his sleeves, made himself more comfortable and shut his eyes in order the better to concentrate. But he was not allowed to think.

"I say," the uyezd councillor said sympathetically in honeyed tones, "it's so hot in here one can hardly breathe, and yet you're all wrapped up in your coat."

"Marsh fever," Bauman replied, his voice muffled and broken as though the attack of fever had made him lose his voice. "I served in Merv, Turkestan. Half the garrison there die of fever every year. I caught it, too. I swallowed quinine till I was stone deaf, but all to no purpose."

"From quinine?" the uyezd councillor exclaimed, boisterously clapping his hands. "Of course! You can't expect chemist's concoctions to be any good against real fever! If you take my advice, you'll be cured in a week. I guarantee it. A popular remedy. And a very simple one at that. Spider's web!"

Bauman did not respond. He continued to lie back in his seat.

"Spider's web?" the captain asked sonorously.

The uyezd councillor started, cringingly bending his beefy neck. He could not make up his mind to look at the captain although the tone of the question had been friendly, even intimate, one might have said.

"Exactly," he hastened to reply. "An ordinary spider's web the like of which you can find in every house. You've got to clean it of dust—well, and of insects, it goes without saying, if any had been caught in it—roll it into a little ball and take it in the morning on an empty stomach. In a week there won't be a trace of fever. Did you hear?" The last question was clearly addressed to Bauman.

"Yes," he replied without opening his eyes. "A web before breakfast. But at the moment I'm thinking of something quite different. In an express train there should be a doctor, medicines, and a bunk in a special compartment—in case anyone falls ill. If the attack grows worse I hope you'll be kind enough to help me to that bunk."

"My dear sir," the uyezd councillor began, but the captain interrupted him with a confident tone of voice that seemed to have even a note of pleasure in it.

"Naturally, sir. I'd consider it an honour to be of service. Perhaps you would like to go now? Really, why should you suffer?"

"Thank you," Bauman replied, "I'll wait a little. Professor Zakharyin, my father's doctor, used to say that the most important thing—more important than medicine—is not to give way to the feeling that one is ill. He said one should tell oneself that one is going to get well whatever happens. That has stuck fast in my mind. Before giving up and taking to a bed of sickness, one has to try to forget one is ill."

"Bravo!" the uyezd councillor applauded. "You've a golden rule there. It was not for nothing that Zakharyin was physician to His Majesty. I must remember that: 'You have to decide to be well.' Amazing! We'll try to find something diverting to do. What shall it be? A little game of cards would be best—banker or macao. There's another good and exciting game: ninth roller. Only, I regret to say, I haven't a pack of cards."

The priest coughed unexpectedly.

"I think I have," he said.

"Blessed be the Lord! You're great, father! Let's have it and we'll play right away."

The priest turned up the skirt of his under-cassock and from the pocket of unpriestly trousers with a gay stripe he drew out two packs of cards; they were wrapped in a fragment of the: *Diocesan News*. He unwrapped the cards carefully and gave them to the uyezd councillor. The latter deftly shuffled them; his nonchalance was obviously overdone.

"What shall it be? Macao for a small stake? Draw a card, Your Reverence."

Here the captain interrupted him.

"Allow me, father," he said in his deep voice, enunciating every word carefully, "to take your place by the window. You're not looking out all the same. While I, frankly, love the winter landscape. Snow and firs. 'Exultantly the peasant renews the trail with his sledge.' My duties rarely permit me—I spend most of my time in—hm—closed premises, so to speak."

"You're welcome to it," the priest nodded readily, and the next moment Bauman felt the pressure of the captain's leg against his knee. "And you, sir, will you join us? It's for your benefit, you know."

"All right, let's start," Bauman replied feebly. "Perhaps it's just the tonic I need."

At that moment a thought flashed through his mind. A plan. Perhaps it would give him the opportunity he needed. Indeed, even...

He put out his hand to take a card from the pack, held out fan-wise, and encountered the captain's cold fingers. He had not waited for an invitation. He drew a card when Bauman did, curling his little finger on which was an emerald set in a thin band of gold.

"Nine of hearts. It's the highest. My deal." He acted as though he were the host and his tone matched his behaviour. "What can we use for a table?"

His eyes swept the luggage racks and fixed unerringly on Bauman's suit-case. A smile played round his mouth.

"That suit-case would be just right. We can turn it up on end and it will make a splendid table. Is it yours, father?"

The priest looked up. The sigh that followed was a blend of sadness and envy.

"Oh, no! Such an expensive suit-case! It belongs to this gentleman."

The captain's smile grew still more confident and malevolent.

"Permit me..."

He raised himself easily on the toes of his patent-leather top-boots and took down the suit-case. His prehensile fingers drummed on the bottom in the habitual searching manner.

"His Reverence is right. It is an expensive case. Looks like a foreign make, too."

"Exactly. Quite obviously a foreign make," the uyezd councillor confirmed with a nervous laugh.

The suit-case was placed on end between the seats. The passage was blocked. The officer put his hands on it with insolent assurance, held it firmly with his feet, and, for the first time, looked straight into Bauman's eyes.

## *Chapter XX*

## LAYING STAKES AGAINST THE BANK

The suit-case had a false bottom. Had the captain hit upon it when he had drummed on it? Be that as it may, he would never let it out of his hands now. It would have to be written off as expenses. Happily he had no illegal literature with him. Only personal things—underwear, collars, ties... Had the captain been aware of this, his muscular legs in their tight blue breeches would not have been clamped so tightly round it. He was probably thinking he had made a great haul. And he had kept on his greatcoat. Should he ask if *he* had fever, too?

The captain carelessly shuffled the pack. With rapt servility the uyezd councillor watched his white fingers squeamishly separating the sticky cards. The priest, after taking from his pocket several handfuls of copper and silver (to Bauman the priest's pocket seemed bottomless), made neat piles of the coins on a newspaper beside him. Fifty kopeks to a pile. Then, with an artistic flourish, he tossed his pectoral cross on its gold chain over his shoulder.

"Why did you do that, Your Reverence?"

"It is unbecoming," the priest sighed sorrowfully as though he were mourning his conduct. "Our Saviour was crucified on the cross, while in the cards crosses are, if you'll pardon me, trumps. If I wear Him on my back He will not see."

"Ten rubles in the bank," the captain said cheerfully, allowing the priest to cut the cards.

The game had begun.

There was still an hour and forty-two minutes before they arrived in Gryazi.

The wheels of the train continued their unconcerned, regular knocking. The soiled, tattered cards were shuffled hazardously. Beyond the window the tall trees resembled an endless, serrated wall, heavy with snow. The train braked sharply. Bauman put his face close to the frost-covered window. The captain immediately followed suit, turning his whole body round. But there was nothing unusual beyond the window; only the snow, the woods, and the sky.

"What are you looking at? What is there?"

Bauman grinned—the anxiety in the captain's voice was unmistakable. He could not resist poking fun at him.

"Didn't you see?" he asked. "Some rooks flew past."

"Rooks!" the priest exclaimed. "Impossible! This is not the season for rooks!"

Bauman bent towards the uyezd councillor.

"I feel the fever coming on again. If you don't mind I'll change my seat. There's a strong draught blowing through the window."

"The draught by the door is worse," the captain hurried to warn him.

But the uyezd councillor had already obligingly risen. Bauman changed to his seat, and was gratified to see the captain's thin lips twitch anxiously, as they had done once before.

The name of the station, in black lettering on a white board, flashed past the window: *Usman*. Bauman had less than an hour, and the situation had not changed.

The main thing now was not to get out of the game before the right moment arrived. The whole plan that had blasted through Bauman's mind, as he put out his hand for the card, would collapse if he lost all his money before that moment. It could easily happen because he had very little money, too little. He had boarded the train in Kiev with only five rubles in his pocket. That was all he had been able to save after covering extra expenses. With that sum one could not hope to hold out long, especially as the other players were laying ten ruble stakes each time. Only the priest was saving the situation by playing a tight-fisted game, too. He laid low stakes, sighing every time he moved a little pile—fifty kopeks—to the suit-case, and spending long minutes in thought.

. . . . . .

At long last!

The bank began rolling for the first time since they had started the game. Up till then it had been beaten at the first, second or third hand in the first, second, or, at the most, the third round. The captain was now dealing his seventh round.

He dealt expertly, breathing heavily, his rakish moustache bristling. His mind was now completely on the game. This was the life for him. He was going strong. His luck was in. All the priest's neat piles and the crumpled notes of the uyezd councillor, who had lost most of his money, were heaped on the suit-case. The priest had moved the last of his coins. There were about two hundred rubles in the bank.

"Lay your stakes!"

The uyezd councillor shook his head and put down two twenty-five-ruble notes. With a deliberately stealthy

movement of his hand Bauman thrust his last yellow-coloured ruble note under a thick pocket-book; it lay in full view on the seat. The edge of his passport jutted out enticingly for the captain.

"I'll play blind. Maybe I'll strike lucky that way. The stake's under the wallet."

The priest became thoughtful. Then he said unexpectedly in the confident and resounding voice usually heard from the pulpit:

"I'll be banker. With a bet of," and he placed on the suit-case three crisp hundred-ruble notes, peeling them off a bundle, the very sight of which set the eyes of both the captain and the uyezd councillor gleaming with respect and envy.

Complete silence reigned in the compartment. Screwing up his right eye, the banker glanced at his card, lifting it slightly at the corner. It could be a nine or an eight—the most formidable cards in macao, the highest.

It was neither.

The captain sighed.

"Will you buy a card from the stock?"

The uyezd councillor bought a card and pondered. The stakes were very high. Should he risk buying a third card in the hope of making up nine, or should he keep to his five?

The priest fidgeted, stroking his unkempt beard with the palm of his hand.

Bauman stood up.

"I'm satisfied with my hand," he said. "I'm not buying. Excuse me—I'll leave you for a minute. The lavatory's on the right isn't it?"

"Put your cap on," the priest drawled, watching the captain nervously fingering his cards. "It's cold in the corridor."

"It doesn't matter. I'll be back in a second. Would you turn up my cards for me if I'm not back in time."

The pack had been cut. The banker could not get up. A break at this moment was out of the question, and that was exactly what Bauman was counting on. If the banker withdrew from the game now he would forfeit the bank. There were four hundred rubles in the kitty. The captain would die rather than relinquish such a sum.

Bauman made for the door. He could not see the captain's face. Behind him the uyezd councilor said in a voice hoarse with excitement:

"Another card."

That very moment the queen of spades was thrown down on the suit-case. The priest squealed in horror, his pulpit voice gone. The captain's heart leapt for joy.

"Give me a closed card."

. . . . . .

There was no one in the corridor. Walking soundlessly along the matting Bauman turned to the right, past the lavatory. He pulled at the heavy frost-bound iron door. It did not budge. Was it locked? Should he climb out on to the buffer? He pressed the handle again. At the second vigorous pull the door creaked open. There was a rush of frosty air and Bauman saw before him a sparse woods, the trees bending close to the marsh under the weight of the snow. He slipped to the lower step and jumped as clear of the train as he could.

. . . . . .

"Eight? You win, Reverend Father."

Feigning indifference the captain threw the pack of cards on the suit-case with trembling hands. The priest scooped up the banknotes and the small change, greedily lifted Bauman's wallet and tittered as he poked a plump finger at the single worn and faded ruble note.

"What a man... And a War Office official at that."

But the captain was not listening. Handicapped by his jingling spurs he stepped over the suit-case, sweeping the priest's winnings to the floor with the skirt of his greatcoat. An answering jingle of spurs came from the farther end of the corridor next the exit on the left. Two police sergeants hurriedly appeared from the service compartment. Behind them writhed the restless shabby informer, his stealthy-looking frightened face muffled in his collar. The captain frowned, made a sign and moved in the opposite direction, to the lavatory. The informer caught up with the captain in the middle of the corridor, having outstripped the staid, slow-moving police sergeants.

The captain turned the handle.

The door of the lavatory opened. It was empty.

He wheeled round, and the informer's eyes rolled in fright.

"Where's he gone?" the officer asked curtly in a hoarse voice.

Then without waiting for a reply, he doubled his fist and struck the informer a savage blow in the mouth.

## *Chapter XXI*

## THE GINGERBREAD LAD

Bauman's fall was broken by the deep, soft blanket of loose snow. He had rolled safely down the high embankment into a snow-drift piled up along the marshy fringe of the woods.

He rose to his feet as soon as the train had thundered by. His temples still throbbed dully, there was pain in his knees, shoulders and chest. The shock had brought on a bout of nausea; there was a bitter taste in his mouth and his throat stung. But already his head was clearing at the joyful thought that he had escaped.

He remembered *The Gingerbread Lad* laughing:

*I know you're as 'hungry as a bear'*
*And would like to eat me, too.*
*I've just outrun a swift-footed hare,*
*There's surely no chance for you.*

Wind-tossed birches stood sparsely in the marsh all round him. They were bare of leaves and crooked. It was bitterly cold and the frost nipped his bare ears and hands. He drew a round lambskin cap from the pocket of his coat.

"Just a minute," Bauman said to himself. "I've got to think."

The doors of the carriage had opened in this direction, to the right. If a search set out—or, what was more likely, *when* the search set out, the police would first of all look on this side of the railway line. Consequently, it would be safer to cross to the other side. Especially as he had to try to leave this locality altogether, reach the South-West Railway Line, and take a train for Yelets. From there it would not be very difficult to reach Moscow.

Yes, but where was the money going to come from. He had none. He had left every ruble he had in the carriage—as "ransom."

Bauman grinned at the thought. The ranson hadn't been very high. There had been only five rubles in the wallet. He turned out his pockets. Nothing there. A look in his wallet would be superfluous. Twenty-five kopeks was all it contained.

Come what may, he had to move on. Some solution would be sure to suggest itself on the way.

The snow that had got into his sleeves and collar was now melting and trickling down in icy streams. He shook out as much of it as he could and climbed the embankment. The woods on the other side were just as sparse. Bauman decided not to slide down; he did not want to leave more tracks than he could help. He started off along

the sleepers in the direction of Voronezh, and walked on until to the right of him he saw a faint trail to the woods. It was dark and narrow and wound snake-like in the snow. He took the trail, going as fast as he could and keeping to the deep footprints left by some heavy person wearing broad felt boots. They were old footprints. Evidently this trail was seldom used. That was all to the good. There is nothing more dangerous than meeting people when one is in flight. Deserted paths are always the best proposition.

The trail led deeper and deeper into the woods. Hoarfrost clung to the branches hanging low overhead. A crow cawed somewhere close by. Searching for food most likely. Bauman could not tell what time it was. His watch had stopped. The spring must have broken from the shock of his fall. That was, he felt, the most unpleasant thing of all. It was bad enough travelling without money, but with no knowledge of the time it was still worse.

A light trail left by a timid rabbit crossed the path. Bauman smilingly eyed the turns and loops that soft timorous paws had traced. A stretch of smooth snow showed where the rabbit had leaped; that meant it was hiding nearby. Should he frighten it? He clapped his hands. In the still air the sound was like the retort of a gun. He looked at the fallen trees where the snow was piled high. But nothing stirred behind them. Only the crow cawed again, far beyond the trees.

He quickened his pace. The woods grew thicker and the rabbit spoors more frequent.

How long had he been walking? An hour? Two hours? The woods seemed endless. It had grown darker—but there could be two reasons for that. Either because nightfall was approaching, or because the trees were taller and grew closer here. He finally reached a cross-roads. Where should he go? To the right or to the left? He had quite lost his bearings long ago. That had been unavoid-

able on a trail that twisted and turned among the trees. Voronezh ought definitely to be on the left. He must therefore keep to the right. On second thought would it not be simplest to make for Voronezh? There was just a chance that the house of a sympathizer which was used as a meeting place had escaped detection. Besides, he had another friend in Voronezh. The baroness. He could go to her as a last resort.

He could not help laughing aloud at the thought of her. What a joke it would be to pay her a call! Bauman could just imagine himself entering the drawing-room of the marshal of the nobility. It was probably furnished in the chic style of court circles; the chic style of the nobility was pretty shoddy these days, for the tottering estates of the landed gentry were not bringing in enough money. The economic collapse of the "first estate" of the Russian empire had arrived. He could picture the tulle curtains at the windows of the drawing-room, with the imprint on them of shepherd lads playing flutes and lambs with ribbons round their necks grazing nearby. Along the wall, no doubt, was a scanty row of gilded spindle-legged chairs, and in the corner a golden cage and a green parrot that could not talk, but that—if the Brem method were used—could be taught to do so.

"Cleo, recite something really fine..."

Bauman smiled to himself as he walked on in what he believed to be the opposite direction to Voronezh. He continued to picture this future meeting in Voronezh, which would conclude with his borrowing fifty rubles from the marshal, who probably wore side-whiskers and a velvet waistcoat. It would be unwise to ask for less, although ten rubles would suffice to get him to Moscow.

The frost grew more intense and the twilight deepened. The tracks left by a broad peasant sledge began to turn black. There seemed to be fewer trees. Bauman found himself on the fringe of the woods.

Bluish snow-covered fields stretched away to the horizon. The first stars came out in the sky. The road forked to right and left; almost skirting the edge of the woods, sledge tracks and footprints followed the line of the bumpy ground. Bauman unhesitatingly took the left road; he wanted to get as far away as possible from the Voronezh railway line.

Suddenly a pain caught him in the back, and almost immediately he felt a dull ache in the left ankle. It hurt to put his weight on it, and after a few steps he began to limp.

So the jump had cost him something after all! It often happened that way. In the heat of the moment one would feel nothing. But when the excitement was over one suddenly discovered a fracture, a pulled muscle, a broken bone, even concussion. True, a long time had passed since Bauman had jumped off the train. He could tell that from the darkness. His watch had stopped at seventeen minutes past two, the moment he had made his jump. He had felt no pain apparently because the injury had been slight; a pulled tendon most likely. There would have been no complications if he had been careful, if he had rested from time to time or had walked at a slower pace. Instead he had stepped out as though on a walking race. He reckoned he had covered not less than twenty to twenty-five *versts*.

But most absurd of all was that the lameness had come upon him when he had reached the open country. If it had happened in the woods he could have found a stick, which would at least have made walking easier. Now he had to hobble across a frost-bound field. But it is better to hobble than not walk at all, and Bauman pushed on, tripping over ruts more and more frequently.

The frost seemed not so intense, but the starry sky had clouded over. A keen wind began to blow, painfully nipping his face, which had already been frost-bitten the night he crossed the frontier. Was this the prelude to a snowstorm?

He remembered reading in the papers recently that

huge snow-drifts had held up trains for 24 hours on end in this area. Thousands of peasants mobilized from the neighbouring villages had been unable to clear the line.

If a snowstorm broke now the railway line would be blocked. That would ruin his chances of getting away from the neighbourhood. There was probably no house or hut within a radius of thirty *versts.*

The wind blew harder. The first grey-white snow-clouds were already moving over the dark, snow-covered field. Bauman tried to ignore the pain in his leg; he quickened his steps.

Lights gleamed in the distance and sudden gusts of wind carried the yelping of dogs. Bauman thought he smelled smoke. A village perhaps? He instantly realized how tired and hungry he was. But it was too dangerous to appear in a village at night; especially in the uniform he was wearing, lamed as he was, and without money. Peasants, particularly in backward outlying places like this, were distrustful of strangers. They were hostile to anyone who looked like a nobleman. The peasant would gladly shelter the poor, even the meanest vagabond, but never a nobleman; all entreaties would fall on deaf ears. Nothing would move him. The best one could expect was to have the door slammed in one's face. What if he were taken to the village policeman?

The village then was out of the question. He was not prepared to be caught like that. There was no alternative but to by-pass the village, to strike the road again and to continue on his way.

Bauman was by now so tired that he could not have thought of a plausible explanation for his presence in these parts if he were questioned. He knew that questions would be unavoidable if he met anyone.

The barking of dogs became more audible. The yellowish lights blinking in the darkness could be seen more clearly. It was time to turn off the road.

Would he again have to trudge through snow-drifts as he had done the night he crossed the frontier?

Now, this time the going was easier. The snow on the ground was hard and carried his weight quite well. Bauman plodded on, his eyes fixed on the lights of the village. He did not want to make a long detour. Suddenly, a strange, huge shadow loomed out of the darkness to the left of him. He was so taken by surprise that he shuddered, but when, almost immediately he realized what stood before him, he smiled to himself with pleasure. This was indeed luck! The shadow was actually a haystack. He could not have wished for a finer bed. It was warm and safe. His only worry was that he might run into the guard—if there was a guard here.

Bauman stood close to the haystack, listening. There was no sign of anyone about. Only the slight rustling of hay with every gust of wind. Bauman scooped out a hollow in the haystack and curled up in it.

What perfect bliss! For a few hours he could throw aside his thoughts and anxieties, stretch out full length, relax his weary limbs, and sleep.

## *Chapter XXII*

## FELLOW COMPANIONS

Bauman woke up refreshed but ravenously hungry, three times as hungry as when he had crawled into the haystack. He felt he would be in no condition to move on if he had nothing to eat.

But there was nothing to eat, nothing but hay. All his pockets contained was an odd button that had come off his coat. True, there were twenty-five kopeks in his purse. That would buy bread; but there had to be a shop. In the reddish morning light he saw a sorry little village, which obviously had no shop. There were a dozen or so

huts, all with thatched roofs; the windows were stuffed with straw to keep out the cold. Stark poverty was written all over them. In all likelihood the villagers had no bread for themselves, let alone bread for sale. Villages like that could never hold out until the new harvest, and the peasants subsisted on goose-foot and potato peelings for half the winter. Apart from the risk entailed, nothing would be gained by going to the village.

Bauman tramped on, concealing himself as best he could behind the hillocks and hastening to get past the village before the people were up and about. Once the village was out of sight he took the road again and made better progress. During the night the ankle had ceased to ache and he could walk without limping. Further along the road he came to a bridge over a wide river, which Bauman could not recall as being in Voronezh Gubernia. He could still remember his Latin verbs, but he had never known his own Russian countryside, because he had never been taught about it in school. He only learned about Vyatka Gubernia while in exile there, and now here he was groping his way through Voronezh Gubernia like a lost soul.

Till now he had met no one, and it was only on the bridge that he overtook an old beggar. He, too, had no doubt spent the night in a haystack, for he had bits of hay sticking to his back.

"Are you going far, Grandpa?"

The beggar stared in astonishment. What had brought such a grand gentleman to this out-of-the-way place at such an early hour?

"To Zadonsk," he said thickly.

He was chewing a dry crust of bread. The sight nauseated Bauman. Somehow his hunger and fatigue had suddenly returned.

Zadonsk. He had never heard of a station of that name. Zadonsk was probably not on the railway. He asked almost automatically:

"How far is it from here to Zadonsk?"

The beggar looked at the snow, then at the sky. The sky was grey and overcast as it had been the previous day.

"With God's help I may reach the town by tomorrow evening. As soon as we get on the high road, to the Don, the road will be good and even, I can tell you."

To the Don? So that was where he was going! Well, it could not be helped now. Zadonsk, therefore, lay beyond the Don.

"Where's Yelets, Grandpa?"

"Yelets?" the beggar said, dumbfounded. "What d'you mean! God help you! Yelets is far away."

He muttered some words to himself and shifted the sack on his shoulders. Judging by the clicking sound the sack contained crusts of bread. More often than not crusts are what people give as alms to tramps like this when they whine or snivel under windows: "Alms for the poor, for the love of Christ."

Bauman was again attacked by nausea, and his stomach seemed to turn inside out. Yet he had gone without food for no more than a day. His hunger was keen, presumably because he had been on the move all the time in the sharp frosty air of the woods and fields.

"Have you any bread, Grandpa? Sell me some—for five kopeks."

"Bread!" the beggar stared at Bauman and suddenly raised his stick as though to defend himself. "Be off, sinful creature! Be off with you, I say, you bandit! I'll cry out! That'll bring the muzhiks running from the fields."

He stepped off the road into deep snow and opened his mouth in a feint of yelling at the top of his voice; he struck a bellicose, dishevelled figure.

The beggar knew there were no peasants in the fields. Nothing but black crows dotted about on the snow. His

birch staff, with crosses cut on it, shook in his infirm hand. It required little effort to take this old tramp by the scruff of his neck and shake from his sack as many crusts as he liked. Bauman felt unable to continue his trek via Zadonsk on an empty stomach.

"Don't fool about, Grandpa," he said calmly getting five kopeks out of his purse. "I'm not a bandit. I'm a doctor. I don't kill people. I heal them. And if I need a dry crust to help me on my way, that's no reason why you should make such a hullabaloo about it. Take the five kopeks, I tell you, and give me some crusts. How do you know I've not sworn to make a pilgrimage to the holy saints! Maybe that's why I'm fasting."

The sack was filthy. Goodness only knew who had given the beggar the crusts and in what condition they had dried. But Bauman crunched them with relish along the road. He felt new strength after he had swallowed the first stale, strong-tasting crust of rye bread.

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Bauman left the beggar hobbling far behind. He had parted company with him at the first turn of the road. He had deliberately outstripped him, although his ankle had again begun to bother him and he found it hard trudging up hill and down dale. But the old man was not a suitable companion and it would be best to get him off Bauman's trail.

The high road the old man had mentioned turned out to be quite near. But Bauman did not find it easier for walking. There were deep ruts in it and his lame leg was wrenched more often than on the quieter cart track, which had been made smooth by the snow.

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How far had he gone? Bauman had no means of knowing. Nothing but hills and fields. From time to time he caught a glimpse of the still, broad, winding river, covered with ice. This must be the Don. Overhead the

sky continued to be grey, heavy, and uninviting. Without a watch he could not tell what progress he was making and how many hours had passed since early morning.

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There were several cart tracks running off to the right from the paved high road. They ended in the distance where little villages huddled close to the hill sides, and thin wisps of blue smoke rose from the chimneys. Close to the high road there were no villages or hamlets, not even the wayside hut of a road-mender. He had met no one all day but the old beggar. Only once did he see a caravan of ten laden sledges passing in the distance on the other side of the Don.

Suddenly behind him he heard the steady thud of horse's hoofs and the creak of sledge runners. He looked round and saw a low broad sledge bumping and swinging from side to side over the ruts. It was overtaking him. A peasant in a cloth cap and a broad red belt round his waist, stared hard at Bauman as the sledge passed by. He frowned suspiciously under bushy eyebrows covered with rime and, before Bauman could open his mouth to speak, whipped the shaggy horse, which was small but sturdy, into a trot.

After he had gone about two hundred yards the peasant pulled up the horse and waited for Bauman, who had deliberately slackened his pace and was ambling along slowly.

"Going to Khlebnoye, your honour?" the peasant asked in a low husky voice when Bauman approached.

"To Khlebnoye," Bauman answered suavely.

"To the doctor, Pyotr Andreyevich Velezhov? Get in, I'll take you there."

Bauman got into the sledge, moving aside a sack lying under the hay. The sack began to shake about violently and the piercing squeal of a small pig caused Bauman to draw himself to the side of the sledge.

"Here, don't knock him about," the peasant said, looking round in annoyance. "Maybe you don't know, but a wolf can hear a young pig ten *versts* away."

"Have you heard tell of wolves in these parts?"

The peasant looked about him—at the hills and the ice on the Don; the river had come in sight again. Beyond it were dense forests on the steep slopes of the hills.

"Why shouldn't there be! There is no house for miles around. Nothing but woods and ravines. And it's getting towards evening."

He whipped up his horse. The young pig grunted, quietly this time, and grew still.

"How did you guess I was on my way to Pyotr Andreyevich?" Bauman asked, settling himself comfortably on the hay.

"Who else?" the peasant grinned. "There's no one else nearer than forty *versts*: only peasants." He fell silent for a minute and spat. "A good man, he is. Helps the peasants."

"How do you mean, helps the peasants?" Bauman asked warily. "In what way?"

"You know all right!" the peasant replied, turning his head and winking significantly. Then he cracked his whip so hard over the back of the horse that it burst into a wild, uneven gallop. "Hey, steady, now!"

## *Chapter XXIII*

## A "CORDIAL WELCOME"

The peasant dropped Bauman on the outskirts of the village. The doctor's house stood by itself, a little apart from the village. It was a timbered house with a sharply sloping roof and it stood in deep snow up to the window-sills. The snow lay thick on the open veranda inside the fretted woodwork railing. The fencing round the house

was buried under snow except for the spiked tips of the palings. The garden had neither paths, nor footprints, not even a merry snow-man with thick nose and black broom under a water-stiffened elbow. That signified there were no children in the house. Bauman puckered his brow. One could not expect friendliness in a house without children.

He approached the house by the back-yard. A dog lazily poked its shaggy head out of a kennel, opened its jaws and made as if to bark, but decided not to.

Bauman went up to the porch and rapped the iron door-knocker against the padded door. There followed no more than a muffled sound. He then rapped a sharp tattoo on the door with his fist. Almost immediately a woman's voice demanded crossly:

"Who's there? Don't smash the door down!"

"I've called to see Pyotr Andreyevich," Bauman announced.

The door remained shut.

"Who's there, I say?"

"A traveller. Pyotr Andreyevich's friend." And as this apprehensive, unfriendly, and indifferent door still failed to yield, he added in an almost threatening tone, "From St. Petersburg. From the capital."

The latch clicked. Bauman pulled the door open with his frozen hand. A draught of hot air swept out from the kitchen, and there before him stood a woman with a dull, fat face, that was round like a pancake.

"Why do you keep people out in the frost? You can knock till Doomsday here!"

He crossed the threshold, hurrying to get into the warm by the stove, which he could see through the open door leading from the hall to the kitchen. Steam rose over the stove from copper pots, big and small, standing close together but all shining with equal brightness. There was an enticing smell of good food.

Swaying heavily a step ahead of Bauman, the woman opened a door to the left of the kitchen and put her kerchiefed head round it.

"Someone to see you."

She spoke in a whisper as though hoping that Bauman, standing close behind her, would not hear.

"You were told not to let anyone in," lisped a voice, quiet but irate. The reply was also whispered, but Bauman could hear every word.

The woman looked round and scratched herself.

"He says he's a friend of yours."

"A friend?" There was a note of astonishment in the voice.

Bauman took hold of the woman's shoulder, pushed her aside and went into the room.

He found himself in a large room crowded with furniture. Massive chests of drawers and cupboards, thick-legged armchairs, a high-backed sofa, and a huge bed that looked as if it could accommodate a whole family, hemmed Bauman in on all sides. The table was heaped with dirty crockery, decanters, bottles, and tins that had in all probability been there since breakfast. There was a cage with a finch in it, feathers ruffled, wings spread out and beak wide open. Nearby was a stout man, going bald, with a pleasant though puffy face, showing signs of kidney trouble. He was in night-shirt and trousers, unshaved and jacketless, and when Bauman appeared he stuck his thumbs through his braces, which made a splash of colour against the white shirt.

"Excuse my appearance; I'm not yet dressed."

"Need we stand on ceremony?" Bauman began with his friendly smile, but seeing the doctor's surprise he added hurriedly, "I, too, am a medical man. My name is Nikolai Vasilyevich Petrov. I've taken the liberty of disturbing you about..."

Velezhov shot a quick look at the door; it had remained open after Bauman had come in.

Bauman laughed easily.

"An amusing incident, as you shall see in a minute," he said. "I'm travelling on foot from Voronezh to Rostov for a wager with a friend. This morning some ruffians robbed me on the road. They took away food, money, everything. A good thing they didn't take my coat and cap. To make things worse I sprained my ankle. Luckily a peasant gave me a lift and advised me to come to you, saying I could be sure to find you very accommodating. The more so, since we are both doctors. There's clearly no sense in my trying to proceed on foot. I can't, anyway, because of my ankle. I would like to borrow ten rubles from you in order to return to Voronezh. It goes without saying that I'll send the money back as soon as I get there."

All the time Bauman was talking Velezhov watched his face intently.

"An incident, indeed!" he exclaimed in mock delight. "What scoundrels!"

He strode past Bauman to the door, closed it and turned round sharply, looking his visitor straight in the eye.

"I might have taken offence, of course," he began slowly. "Why did you invent that story? The wager, the robbery, your ankle ... inventions, all of them. I can see quite well who you are." He raised his hand in discreet warning. "I am not a revolutionary, of course. I'm not cut out to be a hero! I'm only a modest man working for the welfare of the people, a little man plodding away by himself. But I have a sense of duty to my poorer brethren; we, intellectuals owe a debt to the working people that we can never repay. Still, I try to repay with everything I can. There is no reason why you should disguise yourself in my presence. Let me assure you that I can be trusted. You can tell me without fear why you've

come to us here, though I know already. You've come to stir us up. You're a Socialist-Revolutionary."

He held out both his hands with a warm, friendly, open gesture.

"You are just a little mistaken," Bauman returned as he shook hands. "I'm not here to agitate your peasants. Something quite different brought me. And I am not a Narodnik. But generally speaking you've guessed right. I am indeed a revolutionary. But I am a Social-Democrat, not a Socialist-Revolutionary. I've managed to escape arrest and now I'm trying to reach Rostov."

"Now that," said Velezhov, again shaking Bauman's hand in a firmer clasp, "that is really comradely! Now you are talking sense. Ten rubles, you said? Twenty, forty, take as much as you want. I'll remain your debtor to the end of my life. I consider it an honour to contribute towards the emancipation of the people. Matrena!"

The door opened instantly. The woman's face, full of curiosity, looked into the room. She had been eavesdropping, no doubt. Velezhov spread out his arms in a hospitable gesture.

"Put everything you're cooking on the table! See you don't disgrace yourself with the dinner. We must kill the fatted calf for our dear guest."

The woman closed the door without a word. Velezhov took Bauman by the arm and led him to an armchair.

"Sit down and make yourself at home. As Griboyedov has it 'Here's a sofa—repose in quietude.' " He eyed the door and lowered his voice conspiratorially. "If we're going to be candid, let's lay our cards on the table. Are they after you? Has anyone in the village seen you entering my house?"

"You can be at rest on that score," Bauman said with a chuckle and shook his head. "Even if they were after me, they're off on a wild goose chase by now. There's no one on my trail. The peasant who brought me is from

another village. He had no business in Khlebnoye, but immediately drove off to the right. No one saw me and no one knows I'm here."

The doctor nodded with pleasure and relief.

"Are you very tired? Perhaps you'd like to rest?"

Bauman looked at the bed. It had not yet been made: the end of the huge eider-down was on the floor and the crumpled, untidy pillows still showed the outlines of a dirty, greasy head. He hastened to decline the offer.

"Then sit and rest for a while. I'll have to leave you for a few minutes to see to a dressing at the hospital. I'm in a hurry; actually I was about to go out when you called. I had just begun to dress."

He snapped his braces against his breast and put on a jacket.

"You'll excuse me, won't you? The hospital is close by and I'll be back in no time. You rest while I'm gone. Or, if you wish, you may tease my little finch. It's amusing to watch him getting angry."

He poked his finger into the cage and the finch instantly spread out its wings and opened its beak defensively.

"See that?" Velezhov chuckled. "St. George the Victorious. Well, I'm off."

The door slammed. Velezhov buttoned up his coat as he went out. Bauman stretched out luxuriously in the comfortable, soft old armchair that must have been made in the time of Alexander I.

Again he felt ravenously hungry. The doctor had promised him dinner. How gratifying it would be to sit down to a decent meal! Actually, he had not enjoyed a real dinner for a long time; he had been living on sandwiches.

The woman entered and cleared the dirty plates from the table. She looked so friendly now that Bauman could not refrain from asking:

"When do you have dinner? Soon?"

"O-oh, dear me!" the woman drawled, rattling the plates. "We've only just had breakfast. Dinner'll be ready in about three hours time, not before." Seeing Bauman's crestfallen expression, she added kindly, "Would you like something now, after your journey? I can get you something from the larder."

"I wouldn't refuse."

A few minutes later he was seated before a small dish of marinated mushrooms, a fish in vinegar, a small decanter of vodka, stuffed pepper, a wing of a cold roast duck, ham, brawn, and five fried eggs sizzling appetizingly in a pan. The sight of all this food made Bauman feel faint; it was only then that he realized how truly famished he was.

He began with the eggs and some vodka, then took some mushrooms, and a second glass of vodka; but that was only the beginning. His appetite grew as he ate and the brawn and ham still did not satisfy his hunger. The woman had left the room and there was no one to interrupt the feast.

When Velezhov returned he found Bauman polishing off the duck's wing.

"Feasting? That was sensible of Matrena!" he cried in approval. "I was in such a hurry that it did not occur to me you would have a long wait until dinner-time."

"I doubt if I can do it justice now," said Bauman and laughed. "I've had enough to last me a week."

"Don't you believe it! By dinner-time you'll have had plenty of time to work up an appetite. What do you think of Matrena's cooking? Just a simple peasant woman, but she cooks like a real chef."

"She certainly does," Bauman confirmed, "but I'll have no room for dinner all the same."

"Hm," said Velezhov and looked away. "Are you thinking of leaving?" he asked in a hurried whisper. "It's

your affair, of course, though I would have been delighted to spend the night talking over student days. What times they were! *Gaudeamus igitur*! But I understand your position and I dare not detain you."

The thought of hurrying away was at that moment far from Bauman's mind. The warmth and the good food had made him drowsy, his feet tingled and his ankle was aching. Why not spend the night here? There was no danger as far as he could see.

But Velezhov went on speaking rapidly in a low voice:

"If you go to the posting station now, you'll be on a train by nightfall. This is a very convenient hour, the peasants are all at home and you will pass unnoticed."

"The man's losing his nerve, damn him!" Bauman thought vexatiously. "Wants to get rid of me post-haste. Well, I'll go, to hell with him!"

He rose reluctantly. He even showed his reluctance deliberately in his face and in his movements. But Velezhov did not notice it. He was hurrying to take down Bauman's coat that had been hung near the stove. Again the finch spread its wings and opened its beak. The doctor was holding the overcoat too near the cage.

"Let me help you. You must take this route to the posting station. As soon as you get down to the high road, skirt the village by the fencing and on the right you will at once see a well-trodden path. You can't miss it. Go past the hedge and on the left you will find a stable and a hut with a sign-board. I can't tell you how sorry I am that circumstances compel you to hurry off. Well, here's luck!"

Again he took Bauman's hand in both of his and, shaking it firmly, whispered:

"Incidentally, have you any literature? To tell you the truth we in the country are literally lost without something to read."

Literature? Bauman remembered the copy of the *Emancipation* crumpled in his pocket. Just the thing.

"I think I have something," he said, and smiled in spite of himself. He pulled out the magazine. "Only you see what a condition it's in."

"I'll have it ironed out. Matrena will make it look new. She's illiterate and there's no danger of her learning anything. Thank you, thank you very much! Well, good luck, or as one says to sportsmen on such occasions: good hunting!"

He caught Bauman by the arm and led him to the door: on the threshold, noting the latter's growing perplexity, he stopped and slapped himself on the forehead.

"A fine one, I am! I completely forgot about the money. You asked for ten rubles, I think."

He counted out the money, spitting on his fat, awkward finger, which was so unlike that of a doctor's, and handed it to Bauman.

"Here you are. And forget that I gave it you. Don't return it and don't send a postal order. Let us call it a modest contribution to the cause of the revolution."

"He's jittery, that's clear," thought Bauman. "Fed me, shoved ten rubles into my hand, and wants me to leave no trace. Well, I can thank him for that much. Half a loaf is better than no bread, as the saying goes."

A wonderfully savoury smell was again coming from the kitchen, where steam was rising from the pots and butter was sizzling in the pans. Matrena hastily clicked home the latch behind Bauman. She seemed to do it with relish. Bauman descended the steep, slippery steps to the yard. This time the dog growled and barked savagely.

Velezhov was standing at the window as Bauman turned the corner of the house. He was again without his jacket. He smiled and waved a plump hand.

Bauman walked down the hill on which stood the hospital. He had no intention of going to the posting

station. When the hunt for a man was on, the police always telegraphed descriptions of him not only to railway but also to posting stations. He had to make his way cautiously to Zadonsk, without attracting attention; he hadn't far to go; and from there he would get to Yelets and take a train.

After passing down an alley between the huts on the outskirts of the village, Bauman bent his footsteps towards the main street. Except for a woman winding a bucket of water out of a well at the far end it seemed to be deserted. It would be unwise to show he was in a hurry for he might be noticed. So he proceeded on his way with an easy gait, taking long strides nevertheless.

He had not gone more than thirty or forty yards, however, when the air was rent by a wild and piercing whistle and a heavy steel-like hand hit the back of his head, knocking his cap off. Bauman staggered forward, taking his hands out of his pockets in order to defend himself. But before he could turn, a powerful man pounced on him. He could feel his hot breath on the back of his head. The man gripped him round the waist in a bear-like hug with hands that seemed made of iron. Another smaller man ran round and stood in front of Bauman. He had a fair, discoloured beard and wore a trim tanned sheepskin coat with a round brass medallion on his chest.

At the sound of the whistle the doors of the nearest huts began to bang. A boy bounced down like a ball from an adjacent porch.

"Minka!" the man with the medallion bawled out with deafening triumph. "Run for the policeman. Tell him I've sent you. We've caught a student, a political agent. Wanted to stir up trouble. Tell him the elder and his assistant are holding him."

"Are you out of your mind?" Bauman said as calmly as he could, trying to free his hands. "Let me go! I'm a doctor."

The elder swung his fist and hit Bauman in the pit of the stomach.

"Shut up! Take him to the gaol."

A crowd was already gathering. Old women hobbled up as fast as their stiff legs would carry them. The frowning faces of the men were inexplicably clouded. Two men held Bauman while a third searched his pockets. All three wore brass medallions; each medallion signified some rank or other.

The policeman, buttoning up his greatcoat, appeared in the street. Minka came gleefully skipping ahead of him. The policeman was hurrying and his sword knocked against his legs.

He looked Bauman over with the air of an expert in political prisoners and students and nodded approvingly.

The elder finished searching Bauman's pockets. He had taken out everything to the last button and handed it all to the policeman; all except the money Velezhov had given him. This he now carefully put in his breast pocket.

"What's that?" the policeman asked sternly, holding out his hand. "Let's have it!"

But the elder shook his head.

"Pyotr Andreyevich said we should get it as soon as we'd arrested him. So that it wouldn't figure in the protocol; once it gets there you can whistle for it."

Pyotr Andreyevich? Bauman tugged furiously. But the men held him fast.

## *Chapter XXIV*

## THE POLICE DEPARTMENT

Swinging on worn-out, squeaky, rusty springs, two prison carriages, with blinds pulled down over the windows, drew up at a flight of steps leading into a building,

which had long stood in disrepair. At the top of the steps was an old sign-board:

"KIEV GUBERNIA POLICE DEPARTMENT"

The shafts of the two coaches almost knocked against each other, while the coachmen frantically waved their whips, urging on their lean horses. Each was trying to reach the steps first. The doors of both carriages were thrown open simultaneously, making the faded blue curtains fly; police top-boots emerged, spurs jingling. A girl on the pavement stopped to stare, ignoring the stern warning of the sentry standing at the striped sentry-box from which the paint was peeling; it was as dilapidated as the building. Bauman got out of the first carriage and went up the steps with a policeman on either side of him and a third bringing up the rear. A bare-headed worker, his shirt torn at the collar, was led out of the second carriage and escorted into the building in the same way.

Inside the building they went up a staircase, and, on the landing, met an officer with a sheaf of "case files" under his arm. In guttural tones, he asked the senior escort: "To Superintendent Novitsky for questioning?" then nodded and went on without waiting for an answer.

Bauman was taken into a corridor, with red bordered matting on the floor. The procession stopped near a door beside which a policeman was standing at ease. He wore a blue uniform with red braid shoulder-knots and his naked sword was resting in the crook of his arm. Almost simultaneously the worker in the torn shirt came up with his escort. Seeing Bauman, he smiled and held out his hand. Bauman returned the smile and the men shook hands. Just then a thin, nimble man in undress appeared from somewhere and stood near them. He had a sharp nose set in a foxy little face.

"Do you know each other?"

"Fool! D'you think if we did we'd be shaking hands here? What do they teach you in your police station?"

The sentry at the door brought his sword to his shoulder and stood at attention. The door opened. On the threshold, his slender waist exaggerated by a long frock-coat cut in the latest fashion, appeared the officer they had encountered on the stairs. How had he got into the guarded office ahead of them? Was there a special passage from the floor below? A secret chamber?

Long ago Bauman had heard that in some towns the police tortured their prisoners. The practice in Riga had been irrefutably exposed with documentary proofs by the illegal press, and he remembered similar reports concerning Kiev, as well. So far he had given the matter no thought. It had only now occurred to him.

The officer touched his thin curled moustache with the long carefully filed nail of his little finger.

"Kirill Vagrankin," he said, with a guttural roll of the letter "r."

"That's me, I fancy!" said the worker with a wink at Bauman.

The officer opened the door wider and let Kirill Vagrankin in. The escort followed.

"And you, my dear sir," the officer said to Bauman from the threshold, twisting his face into a smirk, "will have to wait. The general, wishing to favour you, has ordered the worker in first; you yourself assert the working class should lead."

He laughed loudly and disappeared into the office, closing the door firmly behind him. Bauman's escort sniffed. The sentry returned his sword to the crook of his arm in lazy and indifferent fashion to signify that a long time might elapse before the door opened again and he would have to snap to attention and stand erect as behoves a sentry at the door of the office of the chief superintendent of a gubernia police department.

## *Chapter XXV*

## KIRILL VAGRANKIN

The office of the chief of the gubernia police department was on the sunny side of the building. Bright, hot shafts of sunlight filtered through the transparent straw-coloured curtains and lay on the carpet, the huge carved walnut desk, and the chief superintendent's broad silver shoulder straps. Chief of Police Novitsky, cigar in mouth, was lolling in an armchair. Behind him hung the portrait of the "happily reigning" emperor. In the corner a little higher to the right was an icon depicting St. George and the Dragon.

"Kirill Vagrankin, fitter at the Gretterov Factory?"

The worker looked round, shifted his weight from one foot to the other and replied with marked deference:

"Yes, Your Excellency."

The chief of police flicked his finger on a blue paper file lying in front of him.

"You are charged with hitting a police officer discharging his duty with a stick at a May Day demonstration."

Vagrankin nodded his head gleefully.

"Quite right," he affirmed. "The police officer was discharging his duty with a stick."

The police escort stifled their amusement; their moustaches twitched.

"Don't play the fool here!" the chief superintendent snapped, boiling with anger. "It was not he but you who had the stick!"

"Me?"

Vagrankin's expression relaxed into a broad, good-natured grin. He rolled up his torn sleeve and crooked his elbow, revealing huge knots of steel-like muscles on his powerful arm.

The chief of police drew back in his armchair. The escorting police shifted their swords.

The worker squared his shoulders.

"I've lost some weight in gaol. But before I was locked up if I'd really wanted to knock anyone over the head with this fist of mine, not just with a stick, his skull would have cracked in two."

"H-hm!"

The chief of police glanced at the tall officer standing by the desk; the officer returned the glance.

"I see," drawled the chief of police, shaking his head, "you're evidently not the man..."

"That's what I've been saying," the worker insisted. "Yet you've kept me in gaol all this time for nothing."

"Enough of that!" The police chief's face darkened. "Don't you lecture me. There's a reason for everything we do. Were you at the demonstration? You were, and what for?"

The worker made no reply. That clearly cheered Novitsky up.

"What for, I'm asking you? Getting mixed up with aliens and the devil knows who else! They're the people who make the trouble and you are the fools who go to gaol for them. You're a Russian, old chap, aren't you?"

The fitter contracted his brows.

"Suppose I am, and what's that got to do with it?"

Novitsky turned in his chair and pointed a finger at the icon of St. George and the Dragon.

"That is the image of the Russian state: a conqueror on a horse and under him sedition vanquished. In the language of the artist—dragon but scientifically speaking—a hydra. I'm asking you what place do you occupy as a Russian workingman?"

"On the horse, that's clear enough," Vagrankin replied without hesitation.

"So you see. And yet you go crawling under the horse, making a hydra out of yourself."

The worker shook his head, and a wily light filled his eyes.

"You're wrong there, Superintendent. Everybody knows the hydra is capitalism. And I, therefore, as a proletarian. . ."

Novitsky's smile vanished; he clenched his fist, and curled his upper lip, baring his teeth.

"That's your argument! A proletarian up on the horse? You're jesting. The world will turn upside down before that happens."

"That's just the idea," said the fitter, before he could stop himself.

"Upside down?" Novitsky exploded. His voice grew husky: "You'll rot for that! I'll put you in chains!"

The worker put his hand behind his back, his mighty muscles rippling, and shrugged his shoulders.

"The law doesn't allow you to put me in chains."

"Law?" Novitsky shouted, rising and thumping himself in the chest. "I'm the law!"

The officer who, meanwhile, had been standing motionless, gave a scarcely perceptible wink. The policeman behind Vagrankin deftly slipped a pair of handcuffs over his clasped hands. The lock clicked before Vagrankin could jerk his hands away; the police seized him by the neck and shoulders.

The officer walked up to the fitter, eyes narrowed and fist tightly clenched.

"Don't bother, Vasili Leontyevich!" said Novitsky, motioning him back with his hand. "You'll only soil the carpet. What he's going to get can wait for him." He nodded to the police escort. "Take him to the inner room. Vasili Leontyevich will have a heart to heart talk with him there."

A small door, almost unnoticeable in the wall, opened at the far end of the room. One policeman led the way,

Vagrankin was pushed in after him, and the tall officer brought up the rear.

Novitsky got his cigar going again, heavily breathing out the smoke.

"A beggar but with the arrogance of a count. Where do they come from ? It gets worse every day. Look how many. . ."

Irritably, he pushed the pile of papers on the desk so that they fell in confusion on the floor. His Excellency swore obscenely and rang the bell. A police sergeant entered.

"Pick those papers up! And bring in that man from Ufa or Voronezh, or wherever it is!"

## *Chapter XXVI*

## THREE AND ONE

After many long months of solitary confinement (Ufa, Voronezh, the halts on the road to exile), after what had seemed an eternity in a dark prison railway carriage, where you couldn't tell day from night, after the curtained horse-drawn carriage and the dark corridor, Bauman was a little dazed by the bright daylight in the office of the chief of police. Novitsky noticed how Bauman blinked in the light and at once he felt in good humour again; the interview with Vagrankin had considerably ruffled him; least of all in the world could he tolerate self-assurance in a prisoner. There were other reasons, too, why Novitsky was looking forward to this interrogation with pleasure.

The escort brought Bauman to Novitsky's desk and at a sign from the latter withdrew, silently closing the door after them. Bauman rapidly cast his eye over the desk. Before the chief of police lay an open file and two familiar passports. Novitsky picked one up.

"This passport was confiscated when you were arrested in Khlebnoye, Zadonsk Uyezd. It follows that you are Nikolai Vasilyevich Petrov of Kursk?"

"It does," Bauman replied, lightly shrugging his shoulders.

The police superintendent returned the first passport to his desk and picked up the second one.

"Oswald Genrikhovich Meize. Is that you, too?"

Attached to the file under the passports Bauman saw a snapshot: it was one of himself, carrying two suit-cases and dressed exactly as when he had left Geneva the previous December. It was a strikingly good picture. He would have to put the comrades in Geneva on their guard. The secret service was evidently efficient there. Or was this the work of the Vilnius "inspector"?

Novitsky caught Bauman's look.

"D'you like it? The spit image of you, isn't it? You recognize yourself, of course. Well, so did we. 'Three in one and one in three' as it says in the catechism. Meize, alias Petrov, alias..." Novitsky bent over the open file and began to read slowly, tapping his finger and pronouncing every word with relish: "Bauman, Nikolai Ernestovich. Born in 1873. Veterinary surgeon. Arrested in 1897 in connection with the case of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class. Imprisoned for twenty two months in the Peter and Paul Fortress, exiled to Vyatka Gubernia from where he escaped abroad..."

There was only one chair at the desk: the one on which the chief of police was seated.

This police officer had no business to make a political prisoner stand in front of him.

Bauman looked round, walked to the wall and brought up one of the armchairs placed there. Novitsky stopped reading and watched Bauman in amazement.

However, he said nothing and when Bauman sat

down, continued reading as though nothing untoward had happened.

"... escaped abroad. Immediately on arriving at some destination he joined the League of Russian Social-Democrats and was the representative of the above League in Zurich. Bauman participated in a private congress of Social-Democrats in Geneva on April 5-18, 1900. Subsequent secret service reports establish that Bauman joined the newly formed *Iskra* revolutionary organization and became a compositor in the printshop of the above organization. Furthermore, as a leading and responsible member of the organization..." Novitsky arched his brows significantly, "... he was entrusted with the work of distributing the *Iskra* to all important centres in Germany and arranging for the *Iskra* to be transported into the Empire. In December 1901 the above Bauman left for Russia..."

"In December, you think?" Bauman interrupted derisively.

"When then?" the police superintendent retorted, dipping a pen in the inkwell. "Be so kind as to tell me, I'll correct it at once. With your permission we'll continue with your remarkable little record. What have you been up to since you returned to us from abroad?" Bauman stretched out in the armchair and closed his eyes. Novitsky waited.

"From the interrogation reports in the file it appears that you are not very sociable," he said through set teeth, disappointedly turning over the pages of the file. " 'Refused to give evidence.' 'Refused to answer during interrogation.' Not very heartening protocols, to say the least! In Ufa and Voronezh you preferred solitary confinement. How's that? All this is to no purpose, Mr. Bauman. We know everything about you anyway."

Bauman made a gesture as though he were turning the handle of a barrel organ.

"You all seem to play the same waltz at interrogations: 'we know everything.' It's boring, Superintendent! You might try something new."

"You don't believe it?" The police superintendent turned purple. "All right, I'll show you. Here, take just this little document." He opened the file again and began to read: "The correspondence in code of the members of the *Iskra* organization, which has been under our observation, revealed that the writers were particularly secretive about two most important persons whom they referred to only by the nicknames 'Akim' and 'Rook.' A communication, received from our agents abroad, indicates that the emigrants were afraid the police might learn about Bauman being in Russia. In their opinion, his arrest," Novitsky smirked, " 'would be an embarrassing loss for the revolution.' This gives us grounds to presume that Bauman was nicknamed *Akim* or *Rook*." He paused. "Well! You can see that we do know something. Have you still any doubts? At your trial you'll realize yourself that we know *everything*. We are not in need of your evidence. I have already completed the investigations. I! Because His Majesty, the Emperor," Novitsky hurriedly ran his fingers down his tunic to see if it was buttoned properly before he let himself pronounce the sacred title of the tsar, "... His Majesty the Emperor was pleased to entrust the *Iskra* case to me, Chief Superintendent Novitsky. Bear that in mind."

He put the cigar stump in his mouth and drew on it. The stump jerked a little but no smoke came. It had gone out again. The general was no cigar smoker.

"And I can assure you I have justified His Imperial Majesty's confidence. I won't deny that investigations into this *Iskra* case have cost us a tidy sum. One hundred thousand gold rubles. In return for that we've sheared you all right!" He snipped the air with his fingers and burst into laughter, throwing back his head. "And your

Lenin's whole plot is finished! You thought you'd send the throne, the nobility and the merchants to the devil! 'Workers of all countries, unite?' No, not on your life you won't!" He brought his fist down on the table and sat bolt upright. "Of that you can be sure. Quite sure, Mr. Bauman. Do you think I would have read out these secret documents to you if I hadn't been certain that you and your friends are finished! It's convict stripes for you! Hard labour! You'll never see daylight. Neither you nor your friends. How many *Iskra* agents has Lenin sent to Russia to kindle the revolution? Eleven? How many have I under lock and key? Eleven!"

The superintendent slapped the desk triumphantly.

"Where are they?" Bauman inquired coolly.

Novitsky raised his eyebrows, at a loss to understand the question.

"How do you mean where?" he mumbled looking Bauman up and down in perplexity. "Behind bars, it goes without saying. In Lukyanovka prison."

Bauman got up, carelessly kicked aside the armchair, moved to the door and flung it wide open.

"A carriage! To the Lukyanovka!" he called to the guards rushing towards him.

## *Chapter XXVII*

## HOUSE-WARMING

The outer iron gates squeaked open on their rusty hinges. At the end of a low wide arch were the inner iron gates.

Near the door of the office in the right-hand wall of the arch between the gates the new prisoner was met by a commissioned prison guard wearing a dirty, threadbare tunic and carrying a sword over his shoulder.

The police escort handed over the warrant. The guard looked at it with the dulled eyes of the drunkard, and

nodded affably, breathing heavily on Bauman. His breath smelt strongly of vodka.

"Congratulations on your arrival! So you spent the winter in Voronezh, eh? Or was it in Ufa? They've given you a run for your money! You probably froze there, eh? It's a rotten gaol! I was stationed in it for half a year—filthy it was. You'll get a good rest here. It'll be like a summer holiday. We've got everything! And excellent weather, eh? Morguntsov, take him to the political prisoners' section in the yard. Leave your bundle here for the time being... that is, until they give you your cell." He nodded emphatically, seeing the surprise in Bauman's eyes. "You see it's the rule. The political prisoners themselves decide who's to go into solitary confinement and who to the common cells. It's to avoid misunderstanding. Naturally, anyone would be flattered to get a solitary—we have only two prisoners in each, while in the common cells they're like herrings in a barrel; no offence meant of course. We're overcrowded. And there are only forty-eight solitary confinement cells. If we were to multiply that by two..."

He tried multiplying for a second, but quickly gave it up and continued:

"There's a bit more room now, but you should have seen the crush on May Day. Half the town, I swear, was picked up. They brought them in in crowds. You have my word as an officer for that! Mostly lads, naturally. We didn't have to trouble ourselves much over them. Cooled them off for a month and let them go. Still, even now a good third of our cells are full of political prisoners. We've had to crowd the convicts up a bit; political prisoners, you know, get priority in gaol..."

Morguntsov, the warder, touched Bauman's elbow.

"Follow me!" he said, and hardly two steps away, added: "When the captain's had a drop he goes on like that all day."

"And when he's sober?" Bauman asked slyly.

"That never happens," the warder laughed, opening a small door in the second, inner gates. "Is that bundle all the luggage you have?"

"That was all they arrested me with," Bauman said, laughing in his turn. "Since then I've not had an opportunity of providing myself with a wardrobe. By the way who's the big noise?" He nodded towards the first gates.

"Sulima, the officer in charge of the political wing of the prison. This way, please! There, this corridor leads straight to the yard. You'll see them all there; no restrictions in our prison. The captain was right when he said it's like being on holiday."

"On holiday?" Bauman looked at the warder a little suspiciously. "What about the secret police? Novitsky?"

"The prison is out of his jurisdiction," the warder replied with a titter. "It used to be, but now it's under the Ministry of Justice. Quite another department. Novitsky has no direct connection with it. Otherwise. . ."

He whistled, which, of course, was against all prison regulations. At any rate, already here at the outset it was perfectly clear to Bauman that the Lukyanovka had been "broken in," to use prison jargon. The "politicals" could spend their time in it as they pleased.

As he passed down the corridor with its many doors—lavatory, punishment cell, the store-room—Bauman became firmly convinced of this. A sheet of white paper was nailed to the wall with the following announcement written in a beautiful hand:

*August 2, at 6 o'clock*
*a discussion will be held in the second section on*
*Cde. Lenin's WHAT IS TO BE DONE?*
*Comrades who have as yet not read the pamphlet may get it from Comrade Marian Gursky, elder in the political wing of the prison*

Gursky? The *Iskra* man? Well, if Gursky was the elder here, then, that was all that needed to be said.

"Lenin!" Bauman glanced at the notice again. "*What Is To Be Done?* Wonderful!"

The warder pushed open a door. They went across a yard that was as narrow as the corridor. At its far end was another door, and behind that the main yard. The first thing that caught Bauman's eye was the black barrel of a Berdan rifle in the hands of a guard, standing in sleepy isolation under a "mushroom"—a piece of round iron roofing held up by a central pole. All round, in groups, pairs and singly were people, people and more people.

"Wait here a minute," the warder said anxiously, "I'll find the elder. You see the yard is divided into sections, for the convenience of the public, so that each may choose the people he prefers to take his exercise with. In the summer the prisoners spend the whole day here, and we do not lock the cells. Marian Gursky is usually in the second section, playing *gorodki*.*

A game of *gorodki* was indeed in progress somewhere, for above the hum of conversation, Bauman could hear the characteristic clatter of the sticks as they struck the pins, and the dull thud as they hit the ground.

The warder strode away. Bauman did not stop to wait. He followed him, looking round and trying to get his bearings. There were three stone walls. The first belonged to the living quarters—the wing for the political prisoners. From behind the second wall came the hum of many voices, laughter, and shouting. The shouts were in convict jargon so he was quite sure that that was the section for the convicts. Beyond the third wall, which was about 14 feet high, was the blue sky; consequently beyond it was freedom. From the "mushroom" across the yard and

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* *Gorodki*—a popular Russian game in which clubs are thrown at five wooden pins arranged to represent various objects—*Tr.*

parallel to the side of the building ran a low stone wall; it divided the yard into two fairly narrow runs; these, evidently were the "sections." From under the "mushroom" the guard could see both sections. Bauman caught up with the warder. On all sides he felt the eyes of people he did not know watching him. Scraps of conversation reached him:

"... firstly we have to work out an organization capable of uniting all genuinely revolutionary forces, and only after that can we call for the attack."

"Lenin again?"

Bauman looked about him. No, he did not know the two men.

The next step brought him within hearing of a heated argument.

"To listen to you *Rabocheye Delo* people one would think that there is no need for a party, that trade unions are enough. That sort of talk completely betrays the workers to the bourgeoisie."

"Betray? If we'd been betraying them we wouldn't be here with you. The bourgeoisie would have made life a bed of roses for us."

"They will, don't worry! Simply they haven't as yet seen through your verbosity. Once they do that they'll not only let you out, but give you golden carriages to ride in. They'll make you ministers."

The warder turned to Bauman with a smile.

"They keep arguing all day. And what about? No one knows. I listen and listen, but for the life of me I can't understand them. Well, and here is the gentleman, the elder."

Yes, there was Gursky scrutinizing him from afar, his eyes screwed up, his fingers combing his round black beard. Marian Gursky. An *Iskra* supporter. A comrade.

"Good day!"

## *Chapter XXVIII*

## THE DRESS REHEARSAL

Gursky politely returned the greeting. Politely, but officially. He made no sign to indicate that he knew the new prisoner. That was as it should be, for how could he know who indeed was standing before him: Petrov, Ivanov, Vasilyev, Kurilov, Meize, or someone else; using which passport, why and where had Bauman been arrested. Bauman hastened to clarify the position.

"They've discovered who I really am, unfortunately."

"Clever of them!" The stern lines on Marian's forehead became smooth again. "So they caught you, be damned to them!" He turned and shouted: "Comrades, it's Bauman!"

He was surrounded. Someone embraced him and someone else gave him a friendly slap on the back.

"Ho-ho-ho! All these faces I know! And Litvinov here, too? I must admit I thought that fool Novitsky was bragging. But really—almost all the Russian *Iskra* men are here."

"It cost a hundred thousand... Picked you up in all parts of Russia!" Litvinov said, shutting his eyes and mimicking Novitsky. "Eleven of you."

He nodded his curly head at the high wall that was covered with signatures. Political prisoners always left their autographs in gaols wherever possible. There were hundreds if not thousands of names on the wall. Bauman's eyes grew dim.

"Don't look there—look higher!"

Bauman raised his head. High above the wavy border of flourishes and crooked clumsy letters there was a clean white space. It was out of reach even for a man standing on another's shoulders. On it in large letters were printed the names of the *Iskra* supporters.

Bobrovsky put a long stick of charcoal into Bauman's hand.

"Sign, newcomer!"

Bauman measured the distance with his eye, and pondered.

"How did you manage it?"

"You don't see how? Yet you call yourself an *Iskra* man."

Bauman looked again. The wall was absolutely smooth, and had no footholds. A slanting piece of rusty ironwork that had at some time been painted red, ran along the top.

"Don't keep me guessing! Where did you get the ladder from?"

The *Iskra* supporters all laughed.

"See what he wants! A ladder! To climb over the wall? You can bet they'll let you have one! No, you find your own way of climbing it. You can't? All right. Then shut your eyes."

Bauman obediently closed his eyes.

"Silvin! On guard!" Gursky clapped his hands.

Silvin hurried to the end of the section leading to the general court-yard. He stopped at the corner and spread out his arms.

"All clear."

Three men instantly stood close together in a line against the wall, placing their hands on the shoulders of the comrade in front. Two other men straddled across the outstretched arms, and again the one sitting at the back placed his hands on the shoulders of the one in front.

"Well, rajah," said Bobrovsky, nudging Bauman, "open your eyes. We've led out your elephant. Ascend!"

He gripped Bauman by the elbow and helped him to spring up to the top pair. This required all the strength in Bauman's supple body. He now saw how much imprisonment had weakened him; the removal by stages from Zadonsk to Vyatka Gubernia; from there to Ufa and

Voronezh... He would have to take some serious exercise here in the Lukyanovka.

From the back of the "elephant" the ironwork on the wall seemed quite near. By stretching just a little he was sure he could...

He strained upwards, measuring the distance and even making a movement as though he were throwing a grapnel at the end of a rope.

"Rook, stop fooling," one of the *Iskra* men in the yard below cried out in stern warning.

But Bauman continued to look upwards with a smile. Why all the fuss? Silvin was standing calmly at his post, there was no danger, there were friends on all sides.

"We'll shake you off!"

The six-legged "elephant" did indeed move and Bauman had to cling to the wall.

"Sign, I say. And then come down!"

"All right."

Bauman leaned towards the wall and the piece of charcoal broke as he wrote

*Bauman*

then above the line of *Iskra* signatures, he wrote large letters to form the word:

*ISKRA* SUPPORTERS

"That's enough! At the interrogation we didn't admit we were connected with *Iskra*. You're giving us away, you know!"

"Never mind!" Bauman laughed, bending his head. "It doesn't matter now!"

"Why?"

Drawing a thick line under all the names to indicate that the list was complete, Bauman turned to the wall again and wrote in a firm hand below it:

***Escaped . . . . . 1902***

"Rook! You lunatic! Rub it out! Quickly!"

For a second Bauman lovingly surveyed his handiwork, cocking his head in good imitation of a rook. Then he rubbed out the first and last lines with his sleeve and slid to the ground, almost dragging Galperin down with him. He immediately became serious and turned to Litvinov in a business-like manner:

"When do we escape?" he asked.

He was given no chance to say any more. Basovsky, who had been standing beside him, quickly rammed a handkerchief into his mouth and a blanket was thrown over his head before he could realize what was happening. He was grasped firmly and, after a moment's struggle, was tripped up. Strong hands pinned him to the ground and some other material was wound round his legs.

Bauman lay face down, choking from the suddenness of the attack, anxiety, and a sense of injury. He was bound fast, held in a vice firmly, and someone above his head gently pressed his shoulders to the ground and sang tauntingly the words of a lullaby:

*Sleep, my little one,*
*Sleep, my son...*

The vice opened. Bauman slowly rose and extricated himself from the blanket. He was completely at a loss. A joke's a joke, but this was going a bit too far.

"You've overstepped the mark, again!" Basovsky said, looking apprehensively at Bobrovsky. "You should start by knocking a man in the hamstrings and only then throw the blanket on him. When he crumples up, you understand. But you see what happened? Even though the Rook couldn't have expected it, all the same..."

A low whistle came from the corner. They all turned their heads towards Silvin, and Bauman caught sight of the tall figure of the sentry with the Berdan rifle appearing under the "mushroom." Litvinov gave a hardly per-

ceptible wink, and Bauman understood. The injury he had felt a moment ago disappeared.

"Was it a dress rehearsal?" he asked quietly with his customary soft smile.

## *Chapter XXIX*

## A PRELIMINARY CONVERSATION

That evening there was to be a ball in Bauman's honour.

It was the tradition in the political prisoners' wing of the Lukyanovka to give a ball in honour of every new arrival.

Bauman had this explained to him by none other than Captain Sulima.

"I'm never one to put the brake on a little singing and dancing, you know, even though it's against regulations," he said during a round of the cells following the after-dinner rest period. "His Imperial Majesty Peter the Great used to say that 'Even regulations are changed when need arises.' I work in accordance with that Imperial decision. I hold that a c-convict, excuse me, I mean a prisoner should feel at home in gaol, to avoid any complaints. That's the way I run things. It makes for happiness all round, for you and for us... Who is the loser if the prisoners amuse themselves for two or three hours after the evening roll-call? Or if the cells are not locked? We make no restrictions on parcels; if someone sends you a hundred cutlets—we'll turn them all over to you. Spirits?" He screwed up his eyes and breathed so heavily in pleasurable anticipation that the smell of vodka became stronger in the cell. "I place no obstacles! For all that I'm proud to say that I enjoy the respect of the prisoners and my chiefs point to me as an example. In some gaols you find hunger strikes, in others—trouble

of some other kind, but here in the Lukyanovka we have peace and quiet." He tripped upon the last word and laughed. "On the subject of quietness, though, I'm afraid there's not much of it. On the contrary, they contrive to beat on tin cans during the dancing! The racket's enough to drown the noise of a rifle shot."

"Do you intend doing some shooting?" Bauman asked, laughing.

"No, why should I?" the captain said, opening wide his dull rheumy eyes. His face clouded over as though he had just remembered something and he walked away, angrily closing, or rather, slamming the door of the cell. Bauman had been "honourably" incarcerated in a solitary confinement cell, which he now shared with Bobrovsky.

"What's the matter with him?" Bauman asked in surprise, nodding his head after the captain.

"He's got a screw loose." Bobrovsky touched his own forehead with a finger. "Too much drink. Did you notice the way his hands shake? That is why we have to hurry with—the evacuation. We do indeed enjoy freedom here to the envy of all other Russian tsarist gaols. The cells aren't locked, we get as many parcels every day as we want. Krokhmal receives illegal foreign newspapers."

"You mean they even let wine through?"

"Wine?" Bobrovsky chuckled. "No. Rum and cognac. At the rate of one bottle for us and one for him, for Sulima. You think he's disinterested in this game of being 'errand boy' for us, as the chief warder of the political wing grumbles? By-the-by, you've got to be careful of him—he's rotten through and through. Sulima gets his slice from every parcel, so why shouldn't he be indulgent? But with birds like that you can expect an about-face of one hundred and eighty degrees any minute; today—everything's easy-going, but tomorrow the screw may be put on so hard that you won't be able to breathe."

"Well, the sooner we get out the better. What's holding us up?"

"As far as we're concerned—everything's ready." Bobrovsky moved nearer to Bauman and lowered his voice. "The route is over the wall and through the back section. The method—you've already seen it: from the 'elephant' we'll throw a grapnel to the top; we've got the material for a ladder. We'll slip down the other side of the wall by a rope; our 'wives' bring us bits of hemp with every parcel. Litvinov and others are twisting it into a rope in the store-room. He's in charge there, you know. They shut themselves in as if they were checking over the stores, and then use the time to make the rope."

"So the plan is to go over the wall, is that it?"

"Yes," Bobrovsky nodded. "And on the other side—well, once we're there that'll take care of itself. Ravines, tall grass, and gullies—the devil knows what else: open country."

"What about the guards? Aren't there guards or patrols?"

"The whole point is that the guards are taken off at eight, that is, after the evening roll-call, when everyone should be locked up in the cells. No doubt Sulima's keeping quiet about the fact that we are up after roll-call until eleven at night, in short, until it is quite dark."

"Marvellous!" Bauman breathed rapturously. "Still, what's holding us up?"

"There are just two snags," Bobrovsky said and frowned. "First, we haven't the money. It isn't enough to escape. We have to separate immediately. And there are eleven of us. Well, we need at least two hundred rubles each. Then the expenses here. We can't manage it for less than two to two and a half thousand. And where can we get such a sum?"

"After all money is a thing that can be acquired," Bauman said, stretching out on his bunk. After his long

wanderings he felt cosy and happy here among his friends; he felt as though he had returned home. "It'll be easier to get some when we've skipped out of here. Have you any money at all now?"

"The 'wives' sent some in," Bobrovsky said with a grin. "A hundred each."

"A hundred!" Bauman exclaimed and was so exasperated that he jumped up from his bunk. "And you're still wavering!"

"In the first place, stop shouting," Bobrovsky cut him short, "the warders here have asses' ears, but they're ears just the same. A hundred rubles won't get you far. And in this business, you know yourself, the chief thing is to make a clean job of it, not to blunder. The political effect will only be complete if no one is caught, if we completely ruin the *Iskra* case for them. You can imagine yourself what a noise that'll make! A mass escape, the like of which the history of Russian gaols has never seen before."

"I must admit," Bauman said with a grimace, "that the conditions for the escape aren't so very difficult. With the lax regime we have here the entire political prison could just walk out, not merely eleven men. That's why I'm afraid the impression will not be as great as we would have liked it to be."

"Yes it will!" Bobrovsky nodded confidently. "Why, do you think they'll admit they let things slide? Oho! When we read the reports of the local authorities we'll split our sides laughing, they'll lay it on so thick. I'll bet it'll turn out that we escaped after a desperate fight with the guards and as a result of some superhuman cunning. I wouldn't be surprised if they wound one of their own people just to throw the blame on us. . ."

"H-e-lp!" someone shouted frantically in the corridor.

"That's Maltsman!" Bauman exclaimed, recognizing the voice. He sprang off the bunk. Bobrovsky caught him

by the arm. The shout was repeated, still more frantically:

"H-e-lp!"

Still grasping Bauman's arm, Bobrovsky opened the door. Maltsman was standing in the middle of the empty corridor and shouting at the top of his voice.

"No one comes, you notice," Bobrovsky assured Bauman with satisfaction, releasing his arm. "Do you get it? We're getting the guards accustomed to these false alarms. In the beginning a shout brought down the whole prison, including the warden, but now you can go on shouting half the day and no one will make a move, not even the warder on duty in the corridor. So now, if anyone does set up a hue and cry when we're doing our exercises close to the wall, he can just go on shouting till he bursts."

Bauman returned to the cell and lay down again.

"I see you really have things well under control. As for money, that's all stuff and nonsense! One hundred each is quite enough. Yes, and the second point—what's the snag? You haven't told me yet."

"The second is more complicated," Bobrovsky sighed, and sat down again on the bunk. "We haven't a grapnel."

"That's more serious," Bauman frowned. "It'll all fall through without a grapnel."

"We ordered it long ago. We're in daily contact with the people outside. Almost all of us have 'wives,' as usual," Bobrovsky continued. "So far they're being allowed in freely. There's nothing difficult about making a grapnel, of course. But how can it be got in? You can't put a bulky thing like that into a pie. Besides, they cut all the pies. Regulations! It can't be hidden in a box of sweets, either."

"M-yes!" said Bauman half-closing his eyes, while he tried to think of a way out. "We must give it more thought."

"No matter how we think, we can't arrive at a solution. We can't take any risks, you understand that. If this business miscarries there'll be another charge against us: attempting to escape, and, most important of all, it will be good-bye to the easy regime here. Then we will never get out."

"Is it possible to have the thing made here in prison?"

"We could," Bobrovsky nodded. "We thought of asking the convicts. There's a chain shop here that forges handcuffs and chains. They've got convicts working in it. We could come to an arrangement for a good price. We've even had offers from them."

"Well, what's the hitch?"

"It's dangerous. They'll make the grapnel all right, but after that they may give us away. After all, they are all burglars, thieves, murderers. They might sell us out at the last minute. No! We have to think of some more reliable plan. Incidentally, it would be a good idea for you to sleep for a while, otherwise you'll not be good company at the ball this evening!"

## *Chapter XXX*

## THE BALL

The "get together" prior to the ball started at seven o'clock; the men "got together," bringing with them everything that would make for comfort—pillows, blankets, even mattresses. Lamps were brought in as soon as it began to grow dark.

They lay down in a ring on the blankets and mattresses, leaving a space in the middle for the dancing. As the "hero of the day," Bauman was given a place in the front row.

The choir consisted of about fifty men. The voices were admirably matched. The royal opera house in Kiev

had an incomparably weaker choir. Only there were no female voices. That was the sole concession Sulima would not make. He would not allow men and women to exercise together. He did however allow the prisoners to choose one elder for the two sections, and Gursky had free access to the women's cells. The same applied to the store-room. Litvinov was in charge there, and if it was necessary to see someone in the women's section, it could always be arranged through him in the store-room.

The choir sang beautifully even without female voices.

*The mighty Baikal bears our boat to the shore...*

Bauman lay on his back, stretched out to his full length, and looked at the distant dark-blue vault of sky. One by one the stars came out.

*Up, wind, move the wave*

How good it was to be alive!

*We haven't much farther to go...*

"Sulima's come," a comrade next to him said curtly.

Captain Sulima, head of the wing for political prisoners.

Yes, this was a prison!

A prison. Well, what of it? All the same, in spite of any prison, it was good to be alive...

"Bauman!"

He raised himself on his elbow.

"The next number is yours. By tradition every person joining our circle has to tell a tale on his first evening here."

"That's impossible!" Bauman laughed. "You can make anything out of me except a story-teller. I have absolutely no talents in that direction. I'm incapable of composing two lines."

"We'll help," Basovsky calmed him. "Tales, as we've been taught, are the product of collective creation. You

only have to begin. The rest will come naturally. If you falter we'll prompt you."

"Only not the way you did it last time, gentlemen!" Sulima said plaintively from somewhere in the darkness. Bauman instantly recognized his hoarse, vodka-soaked voice. "I repeat and give you fair warning that I cannot allow seditious stories, even in the form of fairy-tales."

"Not on your life!" Litvinov caught him up merrily. "A fairy-tale is always about something unreal, but so far the government is quite real, otherwise you wouldn't wear cockades above your foreheads and eagles on your buttons. Don't think what you are thinking and everything will safely fall into its proper place."

The gloomy face of Sulima emerged from the darkness.

"You, Mr. Wallakh, can try and persuade whom you like. But since the story always turns against His Imperial Majesty..."

"It's not the story's fault, surely," Litvinov interrupted. "Then it's agreed: Begin, Rook! Once upon a time..."

"...in a certain kingdom, there lived a..."

"...tsar!" the men chorused.

"There, you see," Sulima murmured glumly, "again a tsar!"

"Are you fed up?" Bauman asked sympathetically, and shook his head. "So are we. But in this story I wasn't going to use that word. We'll say: there once lived a mean little man."

"That's another thing," Sulima said, and hurriedly went back past the line of warders who made way to let him through. They were standing behind the prisoners, listening attentively.

"He was a small man of high birth," Bauman continued, "and stupendously bestial. He prayed for the dead and was a fiend to the living. He had the brains of a

cow and was a great tippler. Took after his father who never had a sober day in his life. In short, he was a filthy idol. Only not of the Horde, but of Khodinsk*. . ."

"Enough!" a rasping voice squealed suddenly in a high falsetto. "The governor has entrusted me—I cannot allow it. Do you suppose that we're utter fools that we can't see at whose person it's all directed?"

"That remains to be seen; we'll discover as the story unfolds. You listen and don't interrupt, Chief Warder Sitkovsky," Bobrovsky said very sternly. "Continue, Bauman!"

And at once a hundred and fifty voices clamoured:

"Con-ti-nue!"

"Stop it, I say. I'll call the governor!" Sitkovsky's falsetto again rang out, and his retreating footsteps sounded dully in the yard.

"What a blackguard that Sitkovsky is. Eternally spying! Go on, Bauman."

"Well, this so-and-so lived for his own pleasure. I shan't say why—you all know that. And one fine day a spark flew in his eye. . ."

Bauman blinked and looked round at the circle.

"The *Iskra*?" voices asked.

"Number one. December 1900. The Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party's newspaper *Iskra*. Epigraph: *The Spark Will Kindle a Flame*. Reply of the Decembrists to Pushkin."

"Litvinov, don't interrupt!"

But Litvinov continued imperturbably:

* This is a hint at the Khodinsk catastrophe which occurred in Khodinsk Field near Moscow where festivities were arranged in 1896 to mark the coronation of Nikolai II. The government took no measures to establish order and, as a result, several tens of thousands of people were hurt and two thousand killed in the rush to receive the paltry presents from the tsar.—*Ed.*

"Number one, page one. Leader: *Urgent Tasks of Our Movement.* 'Russian Social-Democracy has often declared that the immediate political task of the Russian Labour Party should be the overthrow of the autocracy and the winning of political freedom.' "

The lean and stooping figure of Sulima appeared hurriedly from the darkness and stopped in the lamp-lit circle.

"I'm sorry, gentlemen. What's this I hear from Sitkovsky. What, strictly speaking, is the matter?"

"It's just Sitkovsky. Nothing as far as we're concerned," Bauman said appeasingly and rubbed his knee for emphasis, as it were. "I was just saying that a spark got into the eye of this little high-born gentleman. And it proved to be such an uncommon spark that no doctor on earth could get it out, not a single priest could make it come out by praying, not a single charmer could charm it away; it just burned and burned."

"They should have called out the fire brigade," Krokhmal advised morosely.

"Handsome" Krokhmal was gloomy in general this evening; his meeting with Bauman in the prison seemed to irritate him, although Bauman had made no sign to remind him personally or through anyone else that on the very day the conference in Kiev had flopped, he had warned Krokhmal, after spending the night in his flat, that the underground organization in the city was not conspiratorial enough on the whole, and that that rebuke applied to Krokhmal in particular. The matter had caused a breach between them. In the morning Bauman had moved to a hotel. But that did not help; he had been unable to shake the spies off his trail.

"But firemen could not be allowed into the palace, you know!" Bauman said, laughing. "They're reckless chaps, everyone knows that; always courting danger. There's no

telling what men like that may do. Anyhow, only bodyguards were allowed to come near this—so-and-so."

"They could have permitted them to do their work in the street—from a distance."

"Impossible!" Bauman objected after a moment's thought. "Personally he never left the palace—he was afraid. He knew that as soon as he showed his nose in the street the birds would peck him to death."

"Rooks," Galperin prompted.

That raised general laughter.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen!" Sulima's shadow dismally shook its head. "You've somehow got to forbidden ground again. You promised that there would be no mention of His Majesty. In that case what has the palace to do with it?"

"Palace?" Bauman looked at the captain in surprise. "Excuse me, but you don't seem to know the Russian language. We in Nizhni-Novgorod call a back-yard, or farmyard, a palace to distinguish it from, let us say, our truly spacious, free court-yard here," and he made a wide sweeping movement with his arm.

A roar of laughter greeted these words.

"Yes, a farm-yard, and a small one to boot. There's something diminutive about the word 'palace.' And I've already said that the story's about a small gentleman, and that makes it disparaging if only at the mention of the man himself. Well, to continue. No one succeeded in putting out the spark although everyone knew that if that weren't done it would burn out the eye and the brain and destroy the idol. So the idol sent public criers to all parts of his kingdom to find a man who could put the spark out and save him, the brazen idol, from death. The criers set out. I can't tell you how much time went by—things are more easily said than done—but the criers reached a dense forest, where in a ramshackle, tumble-down hut lived Ivan..."

"The Fool," Gursky suggested.

"You're wrong," Bauman replied very earnestly. "Ivan wasn't a fool by a long chalk."

"In stories—he's always called the Fool," everybody protested.

But Bauman held up his hand.

"In old stories. But what was Russia like in those stories?"

He half-closed his eyes and recited with feeling:

*The forest there is full of wonders:*
*From tree to tree the goblin wanders,*
*The mermaid rests there 'mid the brakes,*
*And many a monster foot-prints makes,*
*On chicken feet a cottage there*
*Stands, both of doors and windows bare...*

"Enough of Pushkin, Bauman! Or after him we shan't want to listen to you."

"That's exactly what I want," Bauman laughed. "Let me state in short that since those fairy-tale times Ivan has grown wise. As formerly, he had no land, and he was as poor as the proverbial church-mouse. But no longer was he a fool. The criers stood in front of Ivan's hut and proclaimed the story of the spark and the more Ivan listened the more curious he became. Long ago he had heard about the idol—the land was filled with rumours about how he had shed the blood of tens of thousands on the very first day he ascended the throne..."

"Mr. Bauman!" Sulima whined, his stooping figure making a slanting, grotesque shadow as he moved into the yellow circle of light made by the lamps on the ground. "I shall be forced to take extreme measures."

"That's over and done with," someone laughed. "The story will come easier now. It couldn't be otherwise. You can't throw words out of a song. Was there a catastrophe

at Khodinsk or not, Sulima? Were not ten thousand people maimed and killed for the tsar's pleasure?"

"And Ivan also knew from travellers," Bauman continued, "that the land in that country, which stretches between four oceans from where the sun rises to where it sets, was so rich that no matter where one stepped one found gold or precious stones. No country was richer or more glorious. But she lay bound in poverty by the idol... And when Ivan heard of the spark and remembered what passing people had told him—he pulled a stave out of the wattle..."

"Your Honour!" A warder breathlessly squeezed into the circle. "You're wanted in the office. Superintendent Novitsky and the public prosecutor are there!"

Sulima started and stretched out both his hands. He cut a sorry figure in this illuminated circle—lean, tipsy, his chin shaking.

"Gentlemen!" he said, "have you heard? I humbly ask you to disperse at once to your cells. If the superintendent and the public prosecutor should find out about these after-roll-call exercises..."

But he did not finish. It was unnecessary. Everyone knew without being told. The prisoners began to get up, taking with them blankets, pillows, and mattresses. The lamps were put out.

"In pairs, comrades. No jostling, in perfect order, at the double, quick march!"

The column filed noiselessly past the "mushroom" through the narrow corridor of the yard and into the building. It moved so quietly that even the warders were affected by the general spirit and with bated breath walked on the hard tips of their heavy boots.

## *Chapter XXXI*

## "WHAT IS TO BE DONE?"

The cells were hastily locked. No one checked the prisoners. Bobrovsky explained that that was always the case and the prison authorities themselves hardly ever knew where each prisoner was and how many were in which cell. There were no registers, either for the cells or for the entire corridor; even the general register that was in Sulima's keeping was in a muddled state. Bobrovsky himself had seen names like Bemenfeld in that document. There was no political prisoner of that name either in the prison, or, as far as he knew, in the whole world.

. . . . . .

The alarm proved to be false. Neither Novitsky nor the public prosecutor showed themselves in the corridor of the political prisoners. The flap over the peep-hole in the locked door of Bauman's cell was not once lifted and Bauman, who slept lightly, heard the shuffling steps of a sleepy warder dragging past his door only once.

In the morning he was awakened by loud singing that echoed through the entire wing of the prison:

*Come, rise up to struggle, ye workers all...*

A key grated in the lock.

"What's that?" Bauman asked, swinging his legs to the floor.

"Warder Chekunov," Bobrovsky drawled sweetly. "That is how he wakes us up every morning. They've worked it out all right. Even though we know it's only Chekunov, you wake up at once." He yawned and took his trousers from the stool. "You have to be quick about getting up. The only part of the instructions that is strictly observed here is that which concerns meal times. You find yourself without tea if you oversleep."

. . . . . .

Morning roll-call, ablutions, tea... Bauman had entered into the life of the Lukyanovka prison. By noon he was already sitting in the *Iskra* section of the yard reading Lenin's *What Is To Be Done?* The book had passed through so many hands that it was almost in shreds. In all his trying journey from one halting-place to another, from one prison to the next, this was the first time he had ever obtained a copy. And in it Lenin dealt Economism a shattering blow, drew up a plan for building and organizing that militant party of which every genuine revolutionary was dreaming.

Bauman had to read quickly for there was to be a debate the following day in the second *Iskra* cell. Litvinov had warned him that the debate would be a heated one because there were only a few Leninists here, most of the prisoners being adherents of the *Rabocheye Delo* or Economists—in short, people who advocated that the workers should not be drawn into politics as the bourgeoisie would take care of the revolution for them.

"So you're having arguments, I see?"

Litvinov nodded and pointed to the epigraph on the cover of *What Is To Be Done?*:

"...Party struggles lend a party strength and vitality; the greatest proof of the weakness of a party is diffuseness and the blurring of clearly defined boundaries; a party becomes strong by purging itself... (From a letter by Lassalle to Marx, June 24, 1852)."

"Purging itself," Bauman repeated slowly. "That is very, very true. We shan't be able to do anything as a party if we have people in our ranks, who, at the decisive moment, hold us back or, what is worse, trip us up. Lenin is doing the right thing by sharply raising the question of disassociation. First of all we have to form a strong party bound together by a singleness of thought and will. Only then will the revolution be victorious. Otherwise, it

will be just history repeating itself, as it has already done many a time..."

"Let's not disturb the Rook, comrades," Bobrovsky said, smiling. "We'll get him to open the debate. How about a game of chess, Gursky? Meanwhile the Rook can prepare his arguments."

That proved unnecessary. The arguments were all there, in Lenin's pamphlet. Bauman decided to use Lenin's words and formulations.

## *Chapter XXXII*

## VISITOR

Bauman was not surprised when he was told there was a visitor waiting for him in the office. He knew that on the day he was brought to the Lukyanovka Gursky had notified the people outside to find him a "wife."

Gursky met him halfway from the office (as the elder of the political prisoners he was allowed to move freely about the prison). At a sign from him Bauman stopped.

"See you don't forget that you have a six-year-old son," Gursky grinned. "He's called Lyosha."

"What's his mother's name?"

"You've got me there!" Gursky's eyes opened wide in consternation. "The name's completely flown out of my head—Masha—Varya. No! Well, it really doesn't matter. There won't be anyone else there. You won't have any trouble," he laughed, "that is if no one is let into the visitors' room before you, of course. Just so she won't make a mistake I've told her that you're a little hunchbacked chap, with red hair—as much of it as you've got left, since your bald patch just about covers your whole head. Of special marks I've generously mentioned only one—a sore on your left eye. Well, go along! And make

a point of getting the boy to your side of the grille. And give him a good hug—understand?"

. . . . . .

The visitors' room had not one but two grilles. They stretched right across the room from wall to wall with a space of something like two feet between them. White-whiskered Mokeich, the oldest warder in the gaol, was sitting good-naturedly on a chair between the grilles, his sword across his knees.

The "fiancée"—that is to say, the "wife," since there was a son—was already waiting. She was a tall, beautiful woman. From under the wide brim of her white straw hat, its red silky poppies making a bright splash of colour, Bauman caught a questioning, expectant, and agitated look in her black eyes. She was holding a boy by the hand. He was in a white suit with a blue sailor collar edged with a ribbon. Over it he wore a little apron. For a moment Bauman could not see the reason for this. His eyes smiled as he looked at the woman. It was not the smile of a stranger. It was warm and tender. The woman instantly returned it, raising her free hand to hide her flushing cheek, and began to talk rapidly and incoherently. It was impossible to understand anything. But that, essentially, was how a wife would talk to a beloved husband when she saw him in jail, behind a double grille after a long separation.

That was natural and good, but it was unnatural and bad that the boy should pay no attention to him. When Bauman appeared he looked up only for a second and then continued staring at the old warder—at his white whiskers, his sword, his revolver with the cord attached to it, and the shining buttons on his jacket.

This inattention to a father could seem suspicious. True, of all the warders, Mokeich was perhaps the most easy-going. Even now he was only half awake.

"On the other hand Lyosha might be her son—from a first marriage. . ." thought Bauman. "What idiocy it was not to have asked Gursky whether she's my fiancée, or my unmarried wife. No, he had definitely said 'wife.'"

"Lyosha!" Bauman called to the child. "Have you quite forgotten me, old chap?"

"It's been such a long time!" his mother replied for him and put herself between the boy and the warder so that he would not see the expression on her son's face. Her voice was deep and pleasant. On the whole Bauman was very satisfied with his "wife."

She began to talk softly. Mokeich listened, as the instructions required of him. But he quickly saw that Bauman knew the rules. If you didn't want to have the visit curtailed immediately (that was exactly what the instructions said: "immediately") and if you wanted to continue having visitors even if it meant seeing them through a double grille you had to keep the conversation to family matters only.

Bauman spoke only about what was permitted. About the boy. Whether he was behaving himself and not distressing his mother. About the pussy-cat at home. Whether his wife was continuing her gymnastics and in what condition her hands were now?

"Do you think you could lift a *pood**?" Bauman asked and smiled.

Mokeich even giggled: such a dainty woman to be suddenly asked if she could lift a *pood*!

Then they began to talk about flowers and talked for quite a long time about how she would send him flowers for his birthday party. In three days' time.

And also about some medicine. He asked why he hadn't received it yet.

"How could that be?" she said anxiously. "I took it

* *Pood*—about 36 English pounds.—*Tr.*

to the office myself. Evidently they haven't passed it on to you yet. Oh, yes, I almost forgot: Uncle Yegova's ill. No, no—nothing infectious."

Mokeich pricked up his ears at the sound of that name. There was something familiar about it. He thought he had heard political prisoners mention it before during these visits.

He began turning it over in his mind. But he lost his train of thought at the sudden sound of laughter.

"I'm sure of it! He seems such a kind man."

Bauman and the woman looked at him. Mokeich frowned and got up. There was always something wrong somewhere when people looked at you and laughed. Especially in prison. Anyway, their time was up.

He had already opened his mouth to say as much, but the "wife" forestalled him.

"He wants to kiss Lyosha," she said. "He may, mayn't he? You'll allow him, you're so kind!"

"Against regulations!" Mokeich shouted out, truly frightened, for he could not allow any intercourse with a person from outside. And although the instructions said nothing about children—yet a child, though not completely, was a person just the same. It was out of the question!

But she raised the boy without listening to him—the grille was not high, a little higher than a man. Another second and the boy was in midair, above the dividing passage, swinging from his mother's outstretched arms.

"Hold him," she cried gaily with just a hint of a threat in her voice. "I'll drop him."

"Good heavens!"

The old man caught the child. The mother did actually let him go. But the boy began to struggle desperately as soon as the warder's fingers touched him.

"Mama!" he cried.

"Over here!" Bauman sang out cheerfully.

The boy's shout offended the old warder. He heaved Lyosha roughly over the second grille into Bauman's waiting arms. Bauman hugged the boy, his hands gently caressing the timid child. In the side pocket of the little apron he felt a thickish packet. So that was the reason for the apron!

The woman was smiling at the warder through the grille:

"Thank you ever so much. I could see you were kind."

Mokeich looked at her, his head turned for only a second. But that was enough. The packet was transferred from the pocket of the apron to Bauman's sleeve. Bauman raised Lyosha high in the air, stretching his arms so that the packet would slip towards his shoulder.

"Well, here we are. Catch him, Mother."

The boy's dark eyes were glued to Bauman's face. He felt there was something in the air, but could not tell what it was.

"Over you go!"

The boy sailed over the screen into the arms of the old man, and instantly he was lifted over the second grille.

"Mama!"

Now Lyosha was wearing a broad smile. This time he had enjoyed himself. Especially the way that tall man had thrown him up in the air.

"Again!" he said.

The three adults laughed.

Mokeich, however, recollected himself, sternly puffing out his moustache.

"It's against regulations!"

But Lyosha's feet were already dangling over the first grille.

The warder caught and raised him over the grille to Bauman's side. Bauman kissed him, lifted him high over his head, and the boy found himself sailing back to his mother.

Mokeich wiped off the beads of sweat that had collected on his forehead.

"Your time is up," he said, working his brows into a frown and formidably clattering his sword in its battered scabbard. "Will you please go."

Sulima appeared in the visitors' entrance as though to add official weight to Mokeich's words. He was freshly shaved and wore a clean tunic. To make an impression on the "wife," no doubt. Bauman had heard his *Iskra* friends laugh about the way Sulima always tried to look his best when any of the "wives" were about. Now he was a picture of elegance as he leaned his thin body forward and twisted his moustache. In his left hand he carried a pair of spotless white suède gloves. He looked as though he was on the parade ground.

While everyone's attention was on Sulima, Bauman, pulled his sleeve over his hand, thrust it into his pocket, and gave himself a shake. The packet slid into his pocket. Everything was now in order. Meanwhile Sulima continued eyeing the "wife."

"Your time..." Sulima began.

"I've already told them," Mokeich reported, drawing himself up in the regulation manner.

"Won't you allow us just a few minutes more, please," the woman said. "The time went by so quickly."

"I'm sorry," Sulima said, with a gallant wave of his hand, "but I can't do anything. You've used up all your time, and a *gak*."

"And what?" the woman said, raising her brows in alarm.

"And a *gak*," the captain repeated, clicking his heels. "That is to say, enough and to spare, I thought you understood the local Ukrainian dialect. By your appearance and your name..."

"Did you take me for a Ukrainian?" she laughed. "Is Lusya Ukrainian?"

"So her name was Lusya." Bauman felt he was on safe ground now.

"See you soon, Lusya," he said.

"Good-bye, Nikolai."

. . . . . .

The packet from Lyosha's pocket contained eleven passports—one for each of the men ready to make the break. It was madness to risk eleven documents all in one packet. Yet, if proper thought were given to the matter, it made no difference to the person bringing them whether he was caught with one passport or eleven. Those faked booklets could be got in any numbers.

Bauman laughed. He had contemplated the question from all its aspects and had come to the conclusion that the people outside had done the right thing by sending all the passports in a bunch. Risking it once was better than eleven times, for that reduced the chances of failure by ten.

And that girl Lusya had been splendid. Strong, too, judging by the way she had lifted Lyosha like a feather. Who was she?

But none of the *Iskra* men knew her.

Incidentally, it was of no consequence. Today's first meeting with Lusya was to be the last, because Bauman had given her the final instructions concerning the day set for the escape:

IN THREE DAYS' TIME

## *Chapter XXXIII*

## THE ALARM

Bauman had insisted on speed. With his customary warm and gentle smile he had pointed out that there was no reason why they should delay. He was "forcing events," Krokhmal had said. They had the passports and the money. The material for the ladder—sheets, towels,

stools, and chairs—was in the cells. The "medicine"—chloral hydrate, which was going to be used to drug the warder on duty—had been tried out on Maltsman and others. The right dose had been determined. They had a store of the "medicine" and it had to be used before it "turned sour" or lost its effectiveness. They had arranged about the grapnel. If they waited any longer the rains would set in and they would be unable to go out for their evening exercise.

No one could advance any arguments against this reasoning. That night Bauman and Bobrovsky made a ladder out of prison sheets, torn into long strips. The legs of stools and chairs were used as rungs. In many of the cells the prisoners had their own chairs, bought out of their own money.

The finished ladder had thirteen rungs and was 18 feet long.

It was packed into the mattress on Bauman's bunk. The mattress bulged and the rungs were clearly outlined under the material, in spite of Bauman's efforts to smooth the mattress out. It was this that had finally decided the question of the date. The ladder could not be kept in the cell for any length of time. The warders would be sure to find it at the first search, and there was the chance of its being discovered by the convicts who came to tidy up the cell. That would put the lid on it!

Consequently, postponement was out of the question.

They had to make an attempt the day after tomorrow.

Bobrovsky fell asleep as soon as his head touched his pillow. It had really been a nerve-racking day and he was thoroughly exhausted.

But fatigue had the opposite effect on Bauman. He could not sleep.

It was a trying and tedious experience, not being able to get to sleep. This was the sleeplessness from exhaustion when unwanted thoughts lay heavily on the mind.

They were thoughts about nothing at all. The mind picked up a train of thought from anything the eye happened to light on, and one found oneself lazily trying to piece things together. Could this be called thinking? Of course not. It should be called by some other name. Perhaps science had a name for it, only he did not know what it was.

Bobrovsky was sleeping soundly. He did not snore. Bauman had noticed that people never snored when they were very tired. Was that a rule, or was it simply that the tired people he knew did not snore? Bobrovsky usually snored, yet here he was sleeping quietly. He was lying perfectly still, like a corpse or a human relic.

His Party nickname was Relic, too.

It was a nonsensical nickname, if you came to think of it. Litvinov's pseudonym was somewhat apt—he was called Papa. Essen, too, was suitably nicknamed. Then there was Elena Dmitryevna. Her liking for the word "absolutely" had earned her the name of Absolute. Bauman thought his own pseudonym was rather a good one. Kozuba had said, "herald of spring."

The flame in the lamp had been turned low, and it began to grow dim, thickening the darkness in the cell. Evidently there was no more kerosene in the lamp. Bauman raised himself on his elbow, his movement scaring the huge brown rats ferreting about behind the outer wall near the window. They scampered away dragging their bare tails along the cold stone floor.

Tied to the bars of the window were some sausage and butter which filled the cell with an appetizing smell. That was what had attracted the rats. But the bars were out of their reach.

Bauman had stopped bothering about rats. They were nightly visitors in his cell.

The dying flame, already turning yellow, gave Bauman an unpleasant feeling. There was something sinister

about it. Yes sinister! He was not afraid of saying the word. Words did not scare him.

Sinister!

He felt keenly how much he wanted to hear a cheerful human voice or to shake the strong hand of one of his comrades. Should he wake Bobrovsky or knock on the wall for Litvinov?

That was an idea. An involuntary smile came to his lips at the thought that he had never had occasion to rap out a message on the wall here at the Lukyanovka. Yet they called it a prison! He had probably forgotten the code. But he had only to open his eyes a little, and the whole underground prison code came to his mind as though written out in a table before him.

Bauman turned on his side and faced the wall and, quite unexpectedly, fell asleep.

Two short reports reverberated in his ear.

"They're firing. Do you hear?"

Bauman was instantly awake. He looked up at Bobrovsky's bunk. Relic was sitting with his bare feet on the floor. His hair hung over his forehead. He was listening intently.

Could it be firing? No. All was quiet.

A deathly silence had descended on the cell and seemed to have spread to the entire prison, to the night on this side of the bars and on the other, where freedom lay.

Bobrovsky tiptoed to the door. The long silence was suddenly broken by loud cries, by the tramp of feet, and by the pealing of the alarm bell. Short and vicious pistol shots spat out quite near, almost under the wall. Men in heavy boots lumbered along the corridor, past the cells.

Bauman sprang up and joined Bobrovsky.

They were now standing with their ears to the locked door, breathing heavily and listening to the voices in the corridor.

Then everything became silent again in the political prisoners' wing and in the street, beyond the walls of the prison. But neither Bauman nor Bobrovsky moved away from the door. They continued standing there, barefoot and undressed.

A fast and careful rapping reached them faintly from the right-hand wall. The sound immediately chased away the disquietude of the restless night and their brief weakness, because the prison had come to life.

Lying back on his bunk Bauman distinctly made out four letters; the first letter had been rapped out before he had time to hear the message:

R—E—A—K

A gaol-break?

Without them? And without Litvinov? They knew Litvinov was still here because it was he who was communicating with them.

Bauman began to knock on the wall in turn, trying hard to slow down his hurrying hand. But as bad luck would have it, all the letters were long, each requiring seven signals.

W—H—O

Bobrovsky was lying next to him, his ear pressed to the wall, his lips translating the knocking into letters. The answering word was long, but they guessed it after the first few signals:

C—O—N

Convicts!

"Of all things! And on the very eve of our . . . I'm afraid they'll tighten the screw on the whole prison now."

"No doubt about that," Bobrovsky agreed, his face darkening. "They'll clamp the screw on it. It's always strict after occurrences of this sort. In any case our plans for tomorrow are all gone to the devil, down the drain."

"No!" Bauman banged the table with his fist. But the next moment he thought better of it.

There was nothing to be done about tomorrow, naturally. In the morning they would have to put out the retreat signal—Bauman's black shirt instead of the white towel that had been agreed upon.

The window of his cell could be seen from Poltavskaya Street. Somebody would be watching there, waiting for the signal.

"What a business! However you look at it, those runaway thieves have stolen our tomorrow from us."

A door banged loudly in the corridor. It must have been the door leading to the yard, for no other could make such a heavy, creaking sound. Bauman and Bobrovsky heard the rattle of weapons and then the tramp of many feet.

That meant there was a search party out.

A general search was usual immediately after a gaol-break, while the trail was still hot.

A violent pounding came from the wall:

S—E—

Bauman banged out "We know" with his fist.

They had to do something about the ladder. Eighteen feet of twisted cloth and thirteen rungs. He could almost see the warders ripping open the mattress. They could not fail to feel the ladder when even the eye could make out its tell-tale outlines. Where else could he hide those thirteen rungs in this confounded stone mousetrap?

The steps drew inexorably nearer, accompanied by the rattle of swords and spurs.

Did this mean defeat? Not if he could help it!

Bobrovsky grabbed the only stool in the cell by its leg and leaned his left shoulder against the door frame, ready to deal a blow. As soon as the door opened he intended hitting the first man to enter across the temple

with the edge of the stool and killing him on the spot. That would provide weapons for the two of them.

Bauman wrenched the stool from Bobrovsky's hands and pushed him back to his bunk.

"There's a way out of every situation," he said. "The only place you can't get out of is the grave. Is that where you want to go?"

He lay down, burying his face in the hard pillow. They heard voices beside their door. A few muffled words were exchanged. But the only sound Bauman waited for was the grating of the key in the lock.

That sound, however, did not come.

The men in the corridor began to laugh. It was started by a stranger and taken up by the warders. The steps began to fade away. A heavy iron door was banged shut and again everything grew still.

"Did you hear what they were talking about, Bobrovsky? Their luck's out. Two killed, three wounded, and one beaten to death when they took him in. All the rest in solitary confinement cells. They'll be flogged tomorrow—before they're sent for trial."

Bobrovsky did not reply. His spent nerves had failed under the strain. He was in a dead faint.

## *Chapter XXXIV*

## THE GRAPNEL IN THE BOUQUET

"Kozuba!"

"Yes," Kozuba said, looking up.

Besides him there were five or six workingmen in the room. They were standing round a table on which roses, gillyflowers, and dahlias were piled in confusion. Two girls were arranging them in a bouquet.

The man who had just come in swept his eyes round the room and asked:

"May I?"

Kozuba smiled affectionately:

"In front of the lads? We can't ask them to go out, can we? It's all right, Semyon, go ahead and show off."

Semyon placed a basket on a chair and pulled off the kerchief covering it. He then lifted out a sharp five-pronged iron grapnel.

"I don't know about showing off," he said, "but this'll take the weight of an elephant."

"That is just what it's going to raise. You've hit the nail on the head. You're sure it's strong enough?"

Kozuba weighed the grapnel in his hand and looked closely at the iron. The five hammered prongs looked as though they would grip well and truly. He was satisfied.

How did it happen that he who was a newcomer in Kiev should be responsible for this business of organizing the gaol-break? Was it because of his age? Or because he was a worker? How did it come about that these young workers from the railway depot and workshops, from the Gretterov Factory and others turned to him for instructions after the Kiev police had netted in the entire leadership of the local Party organization?

"Here, Maria Fyodorovna, fix this up as explained to you."

The girl, short, blond, and rosy-cheeked, took the grapnel from Kozuba and gasped:

"My God, it's heavy! Lusya won't be able to carry it even if her life depends on it."

Kozuba gave her a stern look.

"How do you mean she 'won't be able to' if it's necessary? That's not the way to talk. The way I see it I would smuggle a cannon in my pocket if it had to be done. Do as I tell you. We've no time to waste."

Maria dropped the grapnel on to the table.

"Tie the bigger and firmer flowers to the stem so that even a good poke with the fingers won't reveal the iron."

To demonstrate what he meant Kozuba poked his finger into the tightly packed tangled petals of a chrysanthemum.

"You don't have to teach us what to do with flowers," Maria said with a grimace. "Now leave us alone. You've all got some job to do."

The fingers of the two girls worked nimbly and very soon the grapnel was lost in flowers.

"What a pity it's August and there's no lilac! You could hide a man among lilac, to say nothing of a grapnel."

The men offered their advice but for some reason they spoke in half-whispers.

"Fluff the flowers out."

"Tie more of them round the stem."

Maria's companion, a tall girl with dark hair, waved the men aside.

"Oh, stop butting in with your advice. You're only holding things up! As it is it doesn't look like a bouquet of flowers but like some great, ugly cabbage!"

"If you won't tie the flowers closer together they'll feel the iron."

"Feel the iron!" Maria taunted. "Why do you think we've got roses? We'll tie roses round it. Then try and touch it. When I bought them I specially picked the thorniest. Move off, seriously! What about your own job? Is everything ready?"

Was everything, indeed, ready?

Kozuba stepped away from the table, and went over all the details for the hundredth time. The eleven passports had been passed in. The prisoners had already been given the addresses (a separate one for each) where they were to go to after their escape. The money, too, was already in their hands—a hundred rubles for each.

A large dose of fresh "medicine"—chloral hydrate—enough for the whole prison, was there, too.

The boat that was to take some of them down the Dnieper to Darnitsa...

"Is the boat in good condition?"

"Good enough to take you as far as the Black Sea," one of the men replied.

That meant everything was ready. The only thing left was to smuggle the grapnel into the prison. That had to be done by Bauman's "wife."

He cast a sidelong glance at the table, working his moustache. This tall, black-haired woman beside Maria was Bauman's real wife. Her name was Nadezhda, Nadya for short. She had arrived a week ago and had brought the money. The *Iskra* had helped them out. If it hadn't, it would have been impossible to organize the break. Not one of the local "supporters" had been willing to give money. Novitsky's arrests had scared them off. Well, after all they were just philistines.

Bauman's real wife was there, but she could not show herself at the prison without running the danger of being arrested. She, too, was an *Iskra* worker and had come from abroad. She had told them of the work she and Bauman did in the *Iskra* printshop in Geneva.

"It's ready. Call Lusya."

Nadya quite easily raised the huge, magnificent bouquet high over her head. She was strong.

Maria was probably thinking that, for she shook her head doubtfully:

"It's terribly heavy. I honestly think it's too heavy for Lusya."

"Too heavy for me? Just say that again, Maria Fyodorovna. Repeat it in front of me!"

Maria looked round at the wide-open door behind her and laughed:

"There! You're always coming in at the wrong time. Goodness, how beautiful you are today!"

"Only today?" Lusya laughed as she smoothed out

her dress. She seemed to be laughing more than necessary. Her eyes, too, had a feverish light in them. Perhaps that gave her face the particular attraction it had today.

Yes, she was lovely. Her eyes were dark and large, the fair hair, escaping from under her new broad-brimmed hat with its provocatively upturned brim, had a reddish tinge. She had some flowers at her belt. Lyosha, in his Sunday best, held the skirt of his mother's light-grey dress.

Lusya carelessly took the bouquet from Nadya. It pulled on her arm and swung to the floor, making a ringing sound on the parquet. She had not expected it to be that heavy.

"Careful! You almost dropped it. You'd have ruined all our work. I told you it'd be too heavy for you."

Lusya, her face pale, turned angrily on Maria:

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself! I nearly dropped it because I hadn't prepared myself for such a weight. If I'd been ready . . . see here!"

She raised the bouquet with her outstretched arm. Everyone in the room stared at the bouquet and at the pale, thin arm holding it up. The arm trembled slightly.

"That's nothing!" Nadya said, backing up Lusya. "Even if they were to notice it, it is only natural for a wife to tremble a little when she's visiting her husband in prison. When we're agitated about something we find our hands trembling much more than Lusya's are now. And she won't have to hold the bouquet as long as this. She will only have to raise it for a second, you know, and he'll take it from her."

Kozuba looked on anxiously with knitted brows as though some doubts had suddenly assailed him. Lusya felt it without his saying a word and she anxiously looked at the door. Casually she lowered the bouquet and took Lyosha by the hand:

"Well, say good-bye!"

"You remember all the arrangements?" Kozuba said

softly. "Pavlo, who will give the signal, is waiting in Poltavskaya Street. Mind you don't miss him. Well, so long. Stand firm! People's heads are at stake!"

. . . . . .

There was silence as Lusya walked out, but her friends followed her with their eyes.

Would she return? If the grapnel were discovered it would mean imprisonment for her. She would first be taken to Novitsky and then to prison.

That was why she had taken Lyosha with her. If she was arrested the child would remain with her.

When the door closed behind Lusya, Kozuba turned his attention to the others:

"To your posts, comrades! Make sure about the addresses again. As soon as it's dark, be ready."

## *Chapter XXXV*

## BALLOONS

Lusya recognized Pavlo from afar. Curly-headed and sun-tanned, wearing an apron over his red calico shirt, he was walking up and down the road in the gutter because hawkers were not allowed on the pavements. Pavlo was doing a trade; at the end of the taut twisted string in his hand was a bunch of coloured balloons. There were about forty if not more of them, in all shades and hues —blue, red, green... At the top of the bunch was a huge white balloon with a blue cock painted on it. This was the signal balloon. It was the largest and the most expensive.

Pavlo nodded his curly head when he saw Lusya and went up to her, his polished top-boots tapping on the roadway. He looked about him at the passers-by, crying his wares merrily like a real hawker.

"Balloons, coloured balloons! Buy a balloon! A five-kopek one will reach the roof; a ruble balloon will take you to the moon."

He button-holed a fat lady with a silk reticule and a straw mushroom hat.

"Buy one, lady!" he proffered, walking by her side. "Five kopeks—to the rooftops. I guarantee."

The passers-by looked amused.

"Why the rooftops?" said a tipsy workman with a wink at Pavlo, "You'll have all you can do to lift a carcass like that to the lamp-post."

Lusya and Lyosha, unnoticed, came abreast of the vendor. He turned to them, elaborately doffing his cap:

"For five kopeks—to the rooftops. Give the young man a treat."

Lusya smiled. But her face was pale. She felt a throbbing at the temples which would not stop. The bouquet, which she carried in her left hand wrapped in a newspaper, was heavy. It was a long walk to the prison, and she had continually to shift the bouquet from one arm to the other. She could not manage it all the way on one arm. And now both arms ached and were trembling.

But here was Pavlo, and the prison was not far. She had almost arrived.

The muscles of her arm stopped trembling.

"Well, if we buy anything, it will be the one that will reach the moon. You agree, Lyosha?"

Lyosha stared at the ground, hiding his intense joy. Pavlo gave Lusya a direct glance and hurriedly untied the white balloon with the blue cock.

"Hold it tight, young man. If you let it go, it will fly with its tail up."

Lyosha raised his head, rapidly blinking his eyes.

"Uncle Pavlo!"

One of the main rules of underground work was that on meeting a friend one should never look him in the eyes. If you did that he was bound to recognize you. You can disguise your face, voice and height, but you cannot disguise your eyes. Pavlo had not been careful.

Perhaps he had been disturbed because Lusya looked so pale. He had spoken as a hawker, but had not concealed his eyes. And Lyosha had promptly recognized him.

Lusya pulled her son away.

"What Pavlo? You always imagine things."

Luckily there was no one near them and the boy had not been overheard. True, a few steps away was a shrivelled up old hunchbacked woman, wearing a kerchief that completely covered her forehead. She was carrying a basket with a wet fish-tail sticking out of it. Lusya decided she was probably deaf.

Meanwhile, Pavlo was already far off, crying his wares at the cross-roads and shaking his bunch of coloured balloons. "Balloons, pretty balloons!" he cried, looking sideways beyond the high prison wall, at a barred window on the second floor of the extreme wing.

The answer to Lusya's signal was to come from that window.

"Do you think it will fly to the moon, Lyosha dear? Did you hear the man say the cock will fly with its tail upwards? That will be fun! Open your hand, dear, and let the string go."

The boy looked at his mother, with a doubtful light in his eyes which were as large and black as Lusya's. He clenched his fist tighter on the short piece of string.

Lusya became anxious; Lyosha was going to be difficult.

"Look up at the sky, darling. See how blue it is. And the balloon is so white. It will look beautiful sailing up! Won't it be fun?"

Lyosha listened attentively. Then he wiggled his left hand from his mother's grasp and clutched the string with both hands.

"Lyosha!"

. . . . . .

In the prison yard the sound of sticks knocking against pins was unusually loud. Of course that might have

been only an illusion because everything sounded unusually loud that day—voices, the crunch of the sand under shoes, the twittering of the sparrows, and the knocking of *gorodki* sticks.

Gursky was walking arm-in-arm with Bauman. From time to time they gazed with frank interest, perhaps with too much of it, at the sky. It was a clear, sunny day, the sky was blue and there was not a single cloud in it; why should not a prisoner rejoice in such a blue sky? There would not be a blue sky where they would go to serve a term of hard labour in chains. Siberia was not Kiev. And the *Iskra* men, the whole prison knew it, were to be sent to Siberia. Novitsky had finished his investigations, that is to say he had culled from the law books all the articles needed for passing a sentence of hard labour. Some of the charges were: insulting His Majesty; working for the "forcible overthrow of the existing system"; belonging to an "illegal association calling itself..." Nothing had escaped him.

The sentry under the "mushroom" sighed listlessly, while his Berdan rifle dangled over his arm, its muzzle pointing to the ground. In the six years he had been serving here he had seen many political prisoners pass from this yard not only to Siberia but also to the gallows! Not for nothing were the walls covered with signatures.

The names of the *Iskra* men were there, too. As a memento.

"No signal," Gursky growled, running his fingers through his tangled, unkempt beard. "That means no parcel. That means the grapnel isn't ready. Or perhaps there's been some hitch!"

"Oh, stop speculating!" Bauman gave his shoulder a rough push.

He would have said more but just then a white balloon with a blue cock sailed into the sky over the rooftops.

"The signal. Hurry, Rook! Reply. I'll watch for their answer."

Gursky turned sharply towards the *gorodki* players. A heavy stick whirled past him.

"You've gone clean off your head! Walking across when a man's making a throw. Do you want to lose your legs."

Back in his cell, Bauman stood on a stool and tied a long white towel round one of the thick, rusty bars at the window.

The same minute a large bunch of coloured balloons rose gaily into the sky. As soon as he had caught sight of the towel, Pavlo had released the string in his hand, and the balloons had floated away. He chased after them, racing down the street and yelling:

"Curse it, I've let them go! They've slipped away! Catch them somebody!"

Lyosha's mouth opened wide and he forgot his tears about the white balloon with the blue cock that had slipped out of his mother's hand.

The passers-by laughed at Pavlo's antics as he chased after the escaping balloons. The warders in the prison yard laughed too, as with their bearded faces turned upwards they gazed after the balloons already disappearing in the blue. They seemed to be immobile, growing smaller and smaller.

"He'll get it from his master, you may be sure! There must be about twenty rubles worth there. The clumsy fool!"

## *Chapter XXXVI*

## THE ROSES

Higher and higher rose the balloons until they became mere pin-points and finally disappeared.

That completed the three signals. Everything that had to be said had been said.

"We are ready."

"So are we."

"Sending grapnel."

Lusya and her little son approached the prison gates. Her agitation had not passed. On the contrary, when Pavlo began yelling and running she clearly visualized the white towel fluttering in the air from the rusty bars at the window. She thought the whole city could see it and that everyone knew why the three signals had been given, why a cheerful young man was running madly down the street after his balloons and why a beautiful woman in a little hat with upturned brim was carrying a huge bouquet wrapped in newspapers. She was quite certain that the whole city was aware of it all and that it was waiting to see what would happen next.

Lusya kept her nerve with a great effort. Never before had her cheeks burned like this, even Lyosha noticed it.

"What's the matter, Mama? What are you worried about?" the little boy asked.

The warder on duty at the gates, an unshaven, slovenly individual, lowered at her, scarcely opening his sleep-laden eyes, and lazily waved her on:

"Get along. No visitors today."

"Please call the chief of the political department from the office," Lusya said as calmly as she could with a nonchalant toss of the bouquet. "He knows."

The warder spat and crossed one leg over the other.

"I'm not going to call anyone. You heard me say get along! You're not allowed to stand here."

The voice was indifferent but firm. Obviously the warder would not let her in. Instantly Lusya recovered her grip on herself. She tapped the end of her shoe on the iron threshold of the side-gate.

"Will you kindly trouble yourself to open the gate at once! You have no right to refuse to call the chief. It is your duty."

Unexpectedly the warder flew into a rage.

"Get along, I tell you," he growled like a bear. "If you don't I'll arrest you."

Lusya brightened up. Anything was welcome; that would get her to the other side of the gate; once there, she knew she could take care of herself.

"You wouldn't dare!" she cried.

The warder rose, running his fingers through his beard. It was impossible to say what the outcome would have been if Gursky had not at that moment appeared at the small door in the inner gate and walked towards the office.

"Mr. Gursky! I've brought some flowers for Bauman," Lusya cried out desperately, without waiting to recover from her surprise at seeing him. But the words were hardly out of her mouth before she realized this was no chance meeting, but that he had been waiting for her; again she began to feel nervous.

Gursky stopped and nodded; with a smile round his eyes, he went to the door of the office.

The warder stood at the small door thinking. He no longer looked at Lusya, nor she at him. Both were looking at the door of the office in the wall between the two gates.

It opened. Gursky and Sulima came out. Sulima was wearing a clean jacket and seemed taller and thinner than he really was. He leered drunkenly at Lusya and shouted to the warder:

"Let the lady in!"

The key grated in the lock with vexatious fury. Lusya stepped in, literally dragging Lyosha after her. For some reason he suddenly did not want to go in.

Sulima saluted and clicked his heels as though he were wearing spurs and they would give a mellow jingle like the spurs of a life-guard officer. But he was not wearing spurs. His heels clicked feebly.

"May I be of service to you?"

Lyosha hid his head in his mother's skirt. That was just as well. Lusya was a little out of breath and not on account of the grapnel. Something quite different had caused her agitation. She looked past Sulima into Gursky's eyes. He seemed to want to say something to her—to give her a hint about their plans for today; she felt it must be something terribly important. She felt she might not understand his hint and so spoil everything, so her eyes wore an expression that was at once intent, rapt, and pleading.

All Sulima noticed was that she was not looking at him. Drunken people are always quick to take offence. Sulima was sorely offended. He hardly listened to Lusya's jerky sentences about her husband's birthday, about her bringing him flowers and about her wanting to see him.

"See him! That is impossible!"

His voice sounded as wooden, stubborn, and uncompromising as the warder's had done fifteen minutes before. Lusya turned her black limpid eyes to Sulima. But he repeated mulishly:

"I regret that I can't."

"You allowed her to see Bauman before, Sulima," Gursky said ingratiatingly. "And this is rather a special occasion. And Mrs. Bauman..."

He winked at Lusya with a hardly discernible motion of his left eyelid and his lips twitched. There was a suggestion of fun and confidence in his wink and in the way he moved his lips. Lusya's spirits rose.

But again Sulima began to talk with a nasal twang, running a crooked finger down his starched jacket; Lusya grew cold and stern.

"I tell you categorically that I cannot permit you to see him or to give him a parcel. Are these flowers?"

He poked his finger into the paper round the bouquet. It tore, revealing a sharp thorn. Sulima jerked back the pricked finger. It was all so amusing that a smile flickered round Lusya's mouth.

"You should be careful, you know. They're roses and they're prickly."

Gursky again gave a cunning wink and, before Sulima could move, stepped forward and took the bouquet from Lusya's lowered hand.

"With your permission I'll present it to Bauman. I realize it's small enough consolation for not being able to see you personally. But what can we do when Captain Sulima is so adamant. Everyone knows his strong, inexorable character. Good-bye!"

He turned, military fashion. Sulima deliberated, biting his lips. Properly speaking, he should have examined the bouquet—just as a matter of routine. If his superiors in some way heard of it—and the warder there had seen everything—he might get into more trouble.

But while he was trying to assemble his scattered, drunken wits, Gursky had already disappeared through the small door in the second gates. As he went he turned to nod at Lusya with a smile, as much as to say: the last barrier is now safely crossed, the parcel has reached its destination, consequently the prisoners would certainly escape that day.

## *Chapter XXXVII*
## THE ESCAPE

It was almost dusk. A feeble, yellow light already flickered in the lantern under the "mushroom." It was the only light in the yard. The prisoners in solitary confinement had not brought out their lamps; the sky was overcast and the atmosphere raw and damp. Reading out of doors was impossible in such weather. In general, it was unwise to sit on the ground in the yard. This evening all the prisoners were on their feet, pacing the court-yard.

They walked with heavy dragging steps in a close circle between the high walls. This endless pacing round and round made the fog descending on the crowded prison yard seem thicker and more oppressive.

But in the *Iskra* section a noisy and exciting game of *gorodki* was in progress.

"There, I've hit it right on the nose! Set them up again."

"How do you contrive to play in the dark when you can't see a blasted thing?"

"You're wrong there," Bauman laughed. "I can see not only the pins, but also what is going on on the other side of the wall."

"But did you see Gursky go into the building?"

The hurried whisper coming out of the darkness made Bauman look round. Closely he scrutinized the dim outline of a man. It was one of the comrades who was going to stay behind, but would help them to get away. He would be on guard until...

"Is it nine o'clock already? The time has been playing tricks with me; it seemed to be dragging. I thought it was nine long ago, but I daren't trust my own judgement. Get going, Bobrovsky!"

They went to get the ladder, passing through the narrow yard and into the building and up to the second floor. That job had been assigned to them. Gursky and Maltsman were to clear the way for them by seeing that Rudinsky and Voitov, the two warders on duty in the building, were immobilized by the soporific (chloral hydrate in rum).

These two warders made up the entire guard. Fyodorov, the assistant chief warder, should also have been on duty, but he had already gone home as was his custom. Supper at half past eight was a rule in his family and his wife was strict—all the political prisoners knew it. For that reason he never arrived home late, but left the prison, on a good pretext, every evening after the eight o'clock roll-call, after which the prisoners were supposed to be locked in their cells.

The "removal" of Rudinsky and Voitov meant virtually opening the doors of the prison. The only remaining obstacle was the guard under the "mushroom." But, as

Maltsman said, "he had been through rehearsals so many times" that as far as the *Iskra* men were concerned there was no guard. Two corridor warders only had to be taken care of. Particularly Rudinsky, for of all the warders he was the most zealous.

Rudinsky was standing by the entrance to the "solitary confinement corridor" when Bauman and Bobrovsky reached the landing on the second floor. He studied them suspiciously from head to foot, the customary scowl in his eyes:

"Going to sleep already? A bit early today, aren't you?"

Bauman made no reply. He walked slowly to his cell, which was at the far end of the corridor. On the way he met Voitov coming out of Krokhmal's cell. What could that mean? The warders had never before ventured to enter cells in the absence of prisoners. What were Gursky and Maltsman doing?

As though in reply to this question he heard Gursky's voice:

"Voitov, would you come here a minute."

Voitov turned back. Bauman and Bobrovsky entered their cell and pulled the ladder out of the mattress and the grapnel out of the pillow in which it had been concealed in the morning after being separated from the flowers.

"Should we tie it here or in the yard?"

Bauman listened.

"It would be more convenient here; out there we'll have to hurry whether we like it or not. Gursky's still dawdling. Consequently, we still have time."

Indeed, there was time. The business of drugging the warders drew out.

When Voitov had come in Maltsman had pointed to fat-sided bottles on the iron table screwed to the wall near his bunk. Each bottle bore a gold label which had the laconic, mouth-watering message:

JAMAICA RUM

Voitov quickly withdrew his eyes from the bottles. He had no need to read the label; the shape of the bottles told him what they contained. This was excellent rum. He ran his tongue over his hard, prickly moustache.

"We need a corkscrew," Gursky said gently and, following the warder's example, he, too, licked his moustache.

Voitov was quite obviously only waiting to be given the welcome cue. Rum was quite a frequent visitor in the cells of the political prisoners. In the past few weeks this chap Maltsman seemed to be getting more liquor than usual in his parcels. The warders had been treated from every parcel. It looked as though Maltsman himself was a bit of a tippler.

Voitov's hand therefore was already in the pocket of his trousers, clasped round a penknife with a corkscrew. Pulling out the corkscrew with a habitual motion of the hand was only a matter of seconds. The popping of the tight cork was music to his ears.

"Thank you," Gursky said, his teeth flashing. "And now if you will be so kind as to get yourself a glass. We've got to celebrate this, how do you call it, royal name-day."

Voitov averted eyes that were already drunk with anticipation:

"It's against regulations when we're on duty..."

Gursky burst out laughing. Maltsman, who was sitting on his bunk, waved his hand in disgust:

"None of that nonsense. You talk as though it's the first time. Bring a glass!"

The warder looked round at the door:

"I'll have to go to the warders' room for a glass. Rudinsky's there."

Gursky took the hint:

"Bring Rudinsky back, of course. That will mean two glasses."

"If you insist."

Voitov grasped the sheath of his sword with his left hand and hurried out at the double. The clock in the corridor chimed mournfully.

"Twenty minutes past nine! The devil take them!"

The clock was ten minutes fast.

Bauman appeared at the door of the cell:

"What are you two stuck over? We're twenty minutes late already."

"Never mind, we'll make up for it. Pour some of the stuff out, Gursky, to make room for the chloral."

Gursky poured some of the rum into his own mug and Maltsman's and splashed more out of the bottle into a corner behind his bunk. A pungent smell filled the cell.

"Let's have the 'medicine.' "

Maltsman was already holding in readiness a pharmaceutical phial with a yellow label:

FOR EXTERNAL USE

He carefully poured the contents down the neck of the bottle which Gursky was holding.

"Hold it! Enough!"

But Maltsman stubbornly shook his head:

"Keep out of it. You can thank your lucky stars that I know how much is needed. I was the guinea-pig, you remember: I drank a lot of this filth while we were experimenting..."

He continued to pour out the chloral hydrate, tilting the bottom of the phial higher and higher.

"You'll poison them if you're not careful," Gursky muttered, straining his ear for the sound of footsteps. "Don't forget we decided we must, whatever happens, avoid killing anyone."

Maltsman bared his teeth:

"Poison the jackals! If we used a pound of strychnine and not just a little chloral hydrate like this, they would only smack their chops."

He emptied the phial, slipped it under the mattress and gave the bottle a good shake. He was only just in time, for the door opened and Rudinsky's shining face smiled in at them. Both the warders entered, gingerly dragging their heavy, rough boots. Each carried a glass.

The rum gurgled from the bottle. The glasses were filled to the brim. Gursky and Maltsman raised their mugs.

"Your health! Here's wishing you what you wish yourselves!" Rudinsky toasted with a hard swallow.

Two unshaved chins over dirty collars were thrown back simultaneously. The rum disappeared in a gulp. Rudinsky sucked his moustache.

"More?" Maltsman asked harshly.

He began refilling the glasses without waiting for an answer. The warders, moving their lips and laboriously gasping for breath, watched the thick, dark stream as it poured out.

"Enough," said Gursky thickly and stretched his hand out for the bottle.

Maltsman elbowed him away.

"Don't be stingy!"

He laughed hoarsely and defiantly. Both warders chuckled obsequiously and took their glasses with a bow.

Again two chins went up; again two wrinkled necks twitched convulsively.

Suddenly Rudinsky's knees began to shake, his glass moved away from his mouth, but his lips caught at it again and he finished the drink, choking and spattering the sticky liquid over his jacket, the reddish growth on his chin and over the floor, which was littered as is usual prior to a departure. Then with a show of bravado, he held the glass straight out in front of him meaning to put it on the table, and released it. Broken glass scattered over the floor with a faint tinkle. The warder smiled wryly, moved his hand from his neckband to the side of his

jacket, pulling loose a number of buttons, swore roundly and, wheeling sharply, strode to the door.

Watching Rudinsky, Voitov stopped drinking; dull fear flickered in his blood-shot eyes. Maltsman seized the hand with which he was about to lower the glass:

"Stop playing the fool! Drink it up!"

Voitov blinked hard and sat down on a bunk.

"Come on, drink it!" Maltsman urged, stamping his foot.

His pince-nez dropped off his nose and dangled on the cord.

Gursky snatched the glass from the warder's wooden fingers:

"He's past saving already. Look, his eyes are glassy. I told you it was too much."

Maltsman turned away indifferently and adjusted his pince-nez:

"Nothing will happen to him."

He pushed Voitov by the shoulder and the warder submissively measured his length on the bunk.

Bobrovsky and Bauman ran past the open door of the cell, carrying a bulky mattress covered with blankets.

"Rudinsky's gone to the warders' room!" Bauman shouted as he passed. "Hurry while the way is clear!"

Gursky gave the cell a last look from the doorway.

"Sure we haven't forgotten anything?"

"Nothing except this 'corpse'," Maltsman said, grinning and pointing to Voitov. Not for nothing had he tested the "dose" on himself: the warder was snoring stentoriously, his head in the crushed cap thrown back on a pillow.

"There! And you worried at the thought that we might have poisoned him! I told you..."

He did not finish. The words of a Ukrainian song and dance, accompanied by the rattle and clanging of tin

cans reached them in the corridor from the window opening on the yard:

*Here you go, my buckwheat cakes...*

Already? What had happened?

It had been arranged with the prisoners who knew of the break, but did not intend escaping, that they would assist by crowding round the entrance to the political prisoners' wing and sing a noisy tune in order to drown the bustle in the *Iskra* section. The signal had to come from Gursky, who would be the last to leave the building. If they had started singing without waiting for him that meant...

Gursky and Maltsman rushed out of the cell. But in the corridor their way was blocked by Rudinsky. He was lurching from side to side, his face brick-red, his eyes dull and fear-inspiring. Seeing the running prisoners he shouted "hurrah" and sat on the floor. But when they were almost level with him, he threw himself nimbly to the middle of the corridor, stretched out his huge hands and roared hoarsely:

"Help! Stop them!"

Gursky barely managed to jump aside. Maltsman, who was a step behind him, stopped, too, wheezing heavily to get his breath.

The singing in the yard sounded more persistent and closer; the *Iskra* men were obviously making their escape. It was equally clear that not every minute, but every second counted.

"Grab him on the right," Gursky whispered, resolutely squaring his shoulders and moving across to the left, his fists clenched, ready to strike. "We'll tie him with a belt."

"Tie *him*!" Maltsman said with a sickly smile and retreated another step. "When he's sober he can throw ten men like us, but drunk... I should have struck him at once with a stool."

"It was firmly agreed there was to be no bloodshed," Gursky said through his teeth, shifting his weight from one foot to the other.

He could not decide whether to attack this frenzied giant and risk his bear-like hug or to strike him with a stool.

Rudinsky was clutching at the air with his extended fingers. Suddenly a wild light came into his dull eyes. His gaze fell on his own leg, stretched across the corridor. The heavy body in the torn jacket bent over in a frenzy of anger and the man's nails dug at the flat toe of his own boot. Rudinsky grunted, under the strain.

"Got you, you blackguard!"

Two shadows slipped along the wall behind his back. Maltsman and Gursky reached the landing and ran down the stairs two at a time. Prisoners were moving slowly in a single file up the stairs. Gursky stopped for a second:

"What's happened?"

"We're being pushed out of the yard."

"By whom?"

"Sulima. He's blind drunk. And he's not taking no for an answer. You may as well turn back."

"Turn back? Oh, no. Not me!"

Gursky shouldered his way through the men round him and straddling the banisters like a boy, slid down. Near the exit to the yard stood Sulima between two heavy-shouldered warders and flourished a thin, yellow hand. In front of him, still protesting, was a large crowd of prisoners. The men in the rear were singing loudly and someone was wildly clashing the iron "cymbals" of the prison "orchestra." Sulima's voice could not be heard above the din.

Gursky slid so fast down the banisters that he rushed past Sulima and the warders.

"Where are you off to?" Sulima shouted. "Get back to your cells!"

But the ranks had already closed behind Gursky. He was striding rapidly through a crowd of people who made way for him.

"Is Maltsman here?"

"He's just come. Your hand, Gursky!"

He shook somebody's comradely outstretched hand and went to the sentry post. There was no one near the "mushroom." The crowd moved farther off, and the fact that it existed was apparent only because there was some movement in the shadows of the entrance to the "solitary confinement" wing. The sentry stood under the lamp, his head on his chest, his rifle over his arm, bayonet pointing to the ground. Near him were Litvinov, Bauman, and Silvin. They were strolling about the yard with blankets over their arms. When they saw Gursky they motioned to him:

"Hurry! Maltsman's already there. You're the last."

Gursky disappeared in the darkness. The sentry raised his head as though suddenly beginning to wonder why a prisoner had gone far down the court-yard when all the rest were returning to their cells. He moved after Gursky, peering into the night. But Bauman was already after him, stealthily spreading the blanket.

With a swift blow Litvinov knocked the rifle from the sentry's hands. Silvin seized him by the shoulders. In a trice the man was gagged and a blanket thrown over his head; he was on the ground before he knew it. Two more blankets were rolled round him.

*Here you go, my buckwheat cakes...*

The men at the back of the crowd were probably looking round, attracted by the scuffle near the "mushroom." Did they see what was going on? Did they see the sentry fall to the ground, did they see him being dragged to the wall and kept motionless by the hands and knees of three men? No doubt they saw everything because the singing grew louder and the rusty cymbals clashed with redoubled vigour.

Had the sentry shouted? No. Silvin, gasping for breath, was tying a rope round the blanket-swaddled sentry.

"Hold him down," Litvinov whispered. "Neznamov will give the signal when it's your turn to go over the top. He's standing at the corner there. Rook, have you unloaded the rifle? Where is it?"

But Bauman had already gone. Silvin held his knee firmly against the back of the sentry, who was lying with his face to the ground. The man was motionless as though he was dead. Had he suffocated? It wasn't possible. He must be shamming.

The men were already forming into an "elephant" against the outer wall; the "elephant" fell apart time and again and each time the men persistently tried again. The grapnel, tied to the ladder, lay on the sand, with its sharp black claws spread out.

"Why don't you get started?" Gursky blurted as he ran up.

"We were waiting for you and Litvinov," Krokhmal replied in a muffled voice.

"Waiting! Give me a hand!"

Roughly pressing his knees against the shoulders and hands of the men forming the base of the "elephant," Gursky climbed to the top, gripped the grapnel that one of the men handed to him and threw it to the top of the wall. The sharp claws rang against the ironwork. Gursky pulled with all his strength. Iron scraped furiously against iron. Gursky hopefully stepped on the ladder which twisted against the wall. He reached the top and straddled the wall. Tied to the grapnel was a second rope with knots. This he now threw over the wall and, cutting his hands on it, slid down into the vacant lot on the other side.

The "elephant" instantly began to break up. Without coming down the two men who had formed its top caught the ladder and climbed over. The order in which they

were to climb had been settled earlier to avoid a delaying scramble.

Neznamov, who was to signal the alarm from the corner, counted the men as they went over. He was stifled with anxiety.

"... five, six... God, how slow they are!"

In their hurry the *Iskra* men grazed their knees against the dew-moistened bricks. The towels and bedsheets stretched under the weight of the hurrying bodies.

"... seven... eight..."

It was time to signal to Silvin. He was still holding down the sentry.

Neznamov moved forward, but immediately hugged the wall to hide himself in its shadow. The singing had stopped. The last of the political prisoners, scraping their shoes to rub off the sand that clung to them, were already going past Sulima into the building. The Captain, standing between two warders with lanterns, was peering into the yard for stragglers. He would surely see that the sentry was gone and call out. The trio would then go into the yard, lighting it up with their lanterns. Sulima would see Silvin bending over the sentry; and he would see him, Neznamov, standing here. Neznamov looked back to the wall where the shadows of the *Iskra* men had been. There was no one on the iron railing. Only a second ago there were... But now the place was empty, quiet. That meant they had all escaped.

An outcry echoed through the building. Glass crashed in the upper corridor and someone shouted in a voice that was hoarse with frenzy:

"Hold them! H-e-lp!"

Sulima and the warders jerked round and together raced up the corridor. The door remained open. Neznamov ran towards it, shouting into the dark yard without seeing anyone:

"Run!"

Had the get-away failed? Had the police been lying in ambush?

Silvin got off the back of the sentry, leaned his body forward and sprinted round the corner after Neznamov's running figure which he had recognized; he dashed into the entrance; the building was alive with cries and the stamp of feet. He felt almost sure the escape had been detected.

Silvin caught up with Neznamov on the top landing. The latter froze to the ground when he saw him, his eyes becoming round with horror:

"What, didn't you escape? I shouted to you..."

Silvin immediately controlled his feelings. Neznamov wore such an air of guilt and disappointment.

"I misunderstood you. You ran in this direction. And I thought..."

He turned back and took a step down.

"Perhaps I can still make it..."

No. A short, sharp report sounded in the yard. The picture of how the sentry had been overcome stood out clearly in his mind. The rifle had rolled away when Litvinov had knocked it out of the man's hand. Bauman was to have unloaded it or to have pulled out the bolt.

Another shot was fired.

Silvin smiled wryly:

"I see the man's alive, after all. I was worried he might suffocate. Have they all gone?"

Neznamov flushed crimson as though he were being accused of deserting his post.

"Naturally," he mumbled, averting his eyes. "I counted them."

But his heart sank as he said the words. He had counted up to nine. Without Silvin, there should have been eleven.

In the "solitary confinement" corridor they heard Sulima shouting in a breathless falsetto:

"To your cells! Lock the doors!"

But the prisoners did not move. They stood in a close circle round senior warder Rudinsky, who was emitting full-mouthed snores as he lay stretched out, hopelessly drunk, across the corridor.

The alarm bell rang out under the window. It was exactly as on the night the convicts had tried to escape.

"To your cells! Call the roll!"

## *Chapter XXXVIII*

## TALL WEEDS

The prison sheets proved to be made of flimsy material. Under the weight of the *Iskra* men, whose haste made their bodies twice as heavy, the braided cloth had begun to tear and the clumsy crudely-made rungs slipped loose. When it came to Bauman's turn, the ladder was in tatters.

"Faster!" someone whispered from below. Three others were still waiting their turn. Unintentionally he kicked a round, rolling rung out of a slack loop, and fell to the ground. A sharp pain shot through his ankle, forcing him to sit down. For a moment, even less, the thought crossed his mind that he would never be able to get over the top. Indeed, no sooner did he try than he fell again. While he toiled to his feet the last of the men disappeared over the wall. Neznamov shouted something from the corner and ran off. Silence descended on the yard. The next minute it was broken by a sharp report and Bauman remembered that during the scuffle near the "mushroom" he had forgotten to unload the rifle; that had been his job. A shadow loomed at the entrance to the yard. When the second shot was fired he realized that it had been aimed; the bullet struck somewhere close by. Making a supreme effort Bauman hauled himself up and caught the bent edge of the railing with his stiff foot and rolled over.

He had made it! Once on the other side of the wall he moved across a path well-trodden by the feet of sentries and turned in among the tall weeds growing thickly all round. He reached the bottom of a ravine, and ran along it as fast as his lame foot and the sole of one of his boots that had torn loose against the railing would allow him. This was the second time he had sprained the same ankle.

The ravine wound like a snake to the right and left. The ground was slushy, the clayey earth, still wet from the recent rains, making it slippery. He had lost his balance twice already, plastering his hands and clothes with mud. The ravine was definitely leading him more and more to the left. That was not the route he had been given. He had been told to go to the right along the wall towards the highway. If he followed the ravine he was bound to lose his way.

He scrambled up the steep slope and again found himself in a thick growth of thistle, burdock, and tall weeds. He stopped to listen. There was not a sound, not a rustle. Black clouds had gathered and hung so low overhead that they seemed to touch the ground. There was no sign of life, although the *Iskra* men had all started out from the same direction. Had he lagged so much behind?

The road was criss-crossed with streamlets and puddles. The mud squelched underfoot. Bauman could not determine where he was going or whether he was on the right road. Of one thing he was keenly aware, and that was that in his present state he could not go to the hotel where Nadya was waiting for him. He had already been told about her arrival. His shoes and clothes were muddy, he had no hat and the sole of one shoe was hanging loose. That would mark him immediately and he would be arrested the minute he entered the hotel.

The hotel, therefore, was out of the question. That meant...

That meant he had to remember one of the Kiev addresses that used to be safe before the *Iskra* supporters were arrested. It went without saying that he could not go to Krokhmal's flat, where he had spent a night before moving to a hotel. There was another flat that he might chance. It was in Reitarskaya Street, 7. But for the life of him he could not recall the number of the apartment. He closed his eyes and thought hard. The number quite eluded him. Perhaps he had never known it. He had once been told how to reach it, but he had had nothing in writing.

He reached a second ravine. There was nothing about to indicate the presence of a high road. Bauman thought it quite probable that he was walking in a circle; he had been moving for a long time now and the waste area outside the prison could not be so large.

The tall silent weeds and the low still clouds gave him a ghastly sensation of futility and loneliness, such as he had never experienced before.

But the sensation passed in a twinkling. Because in that twinkling—through the darkness of the night, shattering the stillness—came the gallop of horses. The sound did not come from behind, but was advancing towards him. He heard the snorting of horses, the crackle of dry, withered weeds, and a voice issuing commands. It was so near that he could hear every syllable.

"Fan out to the left!"

It was a Cossack posse.

The sounds instantly put heart into Bauman. The wasteland sprang to life with the death-dealing tread of the enemy, and danger brightened the sombre night.

The horsemen moved rapidly, bending low over their saddles and thrusting their lances into the weeds about them.

Bauman pressed close to the ground and crawled forward to break through the Cossack cordon.

## *Chapter XXXIX*

## THE NUT-CRACKER

The clock had struck twelve.

A lamp was burning brightly in the small room, neat and cosy, where four people were seated: Kozuba, Kirill Vagrankin, Lusya and little Lyosha, his drowsy head resting against his mother.

"It's bed-time, Lyosha," Lusya said in a tired voice, pronouncing words she had already repeated many times in vain.

But the boy huddled closer to her:

"You promised Daddy would come soon."

Lusya's lips trembled.

"He might not come today. Not today, Lyosha dear. It's very late. Besides, it's raining outdoors. Can't you hear it? Let me put you to bed, Sonny."

Kirill nervously got up from the sofa.

"Well, I don't know what you're going to do, Comrade Kozuba, but I'm going. I'm sure there's been trouble somewhere. The alarm was given at twenty minutes past nine. At ten I saw Cossacks cantering down the Poltavskaya. Consequently, one way or another, that puts an end to the whole business. If they had been successful, Razin would have been here now and drinking his fourth cup of tea."

"Sit down," said Kozuba and frowned heavily. "You can't go anywhere at this hour. It's night, and raining... do you think you can find him? Perhaps he's lost his way."

"Lost his way!" Kirill cried indignantly. "Lusya, do you hear? Your husband—lost his way! Why, he can go to any place in Kiev blindfolded—he knows the city like... No, I'm sure something has happened."

He rose, but sat down again at an angry sign from Kozuba.

"Stay here, I tell you! You can't go loafing to every

address on the list at this time of night. And if the whole thing has been bungled we can't do anything about it now. I know there's nothing more humiliating than sitting and waiting. But, for the moment, there's nothing else we can do."

They thought they heard the bell ring. The sound was so faint that they doubted their ears. Yet they all started in their seats. Lusya bent forward and stiffened. The bell rang again—it was clear and insistent this time.

Razin!

Lusya raised herself slightly but sank back into her chair again, panting in apprehension. Lyosha clung to her hand, bewildered. Kirill hurried to the passage. The bell rang a third time; it was scarcely audible, as though the person pressing the knob had changed his mind and was taking his farewell.

"I'm sure it's one of our people," Kozuba said with conviction and moved towards the door.

It opened before he could reach it. He caught a glimpse of Kirill's perplexed face. Then a man without a hat and in clothes spattered with mud staggered into the room after Kirill. Beneath his tangled hair was a high forehead and clear eyes.

"Rook!" Kozuba shouted and hugged the newcomer with arms that somehow began to tremble. "What brought you here? How did you get to us? You were given another address. Oh, but how glad I am to see you!"

Lyosha pressed closer to his mother, watching Bauman with steady eyes.

"He's not—he's not my Daddy. He's that..."

Lusya, her face pale as a sheet, whispered:

"Hush, dear. No, it's not father. But it means Daddy will soon be here." Then to Bauman she said: "Tell me, what happened to the others?"

Bauman freed himself from Kozuba's bear-like embraces.

"So you left Moscow, after all? Well, I'm glad..." He stretched both his hands to Lusya. "The others? Everything worked like clockwork. Well, I really didn't expect to meet my—wife. I can see now that I made a happy choice in coming here; I did not risk going to Nadya. I could not go to a hotel dressed like this, could I? And without luggage, too."

With a smile Bauman indicated his clothes and shoes.

"I fancy I got through the street safely only because I prentended to be drunk: not drunk enough for a policeman to run me in, but enough to make people understand why I'm covered with mud and the sole's almost off my shoe."

He raised his foot and flapped the sole. It hung by a thread, as it were.

"D'you see that? You can't imagine what a nuisance it was to me. I thought I'd give up the ghost. Luckily I remembered there was a place on Reitarskaya Street where I could go. I took a chance. How is my wife? If you give me a change of clothes, I'll go..."

Kozuba could not help turning his eyes to the clock over the cupboard. Bauman, too, looked at the clock and frowned:

"A quarter past twelve? It's late. What do you think?"

His tired voice broke off; he sounded so much like a pleading boy that Kozuba smiled in spite of himself:

"Well, I can't say. You could of course pretend to be drunk again. As though you've just come from some place of entertainment. People drink there till two, even four in the morning."

But Kirill shook his head:

"I hardly think it'd be wise. And then, we haven't the clothes to fit you." But seeing Bauman's perplexed look, he hastened to explain: "We were waiting for Razin here. One of our Ekaterinoslav comrades, you know. He was among those arrested on May Day. This was the place he should have come to."

"Razin?" Bauman asked, with a lift of his brows. "But he decided yesterday that he would not go with us."

"What?" Lusya cried. "You mean he stayed behind voluntarily?"

"Yes," Bauman nodded. "He thought the risk wasn't worth while. He was arrested only for the May Day demonstration. The most he can get is exile to some not very distant place. Why, what's wrong?"

Lusya was sobbing with her head in her hands:

"I—I came here specially, with Lyosha. I purposely did not let him know. I wanted it to be a surprise for him. I wanted him to find us here!"

"Lusya is Razin's wife, you see," Kozuba explained. "It all worked out wrong. You should have seen how she waited!"

"If only he had known," Bauman muttered slowly. "But don't you see he acted wisely?"

"Wisely!" Lusya flung out angrily at him and straightened her shoulders. "Then let him remain in prison with his wisdom. Without me... Come along, Lyosha!"

"Why are you so angry?" Bauman said with a faint smile. "Why? You yourself are partly to blame. Why didn't you let him know that you were here? If he had known he would probably have come with us."

Lusya looked straight into Bauman's eyes:

"What have I to do with it? Why are you so insincere? As though you don't agree with me that a man is no revolutionary if he remains in prison one extra minute when he has an opportunity to escape. I don't care for his 'wisdom' and calculations! He should have been a book-keeper!"

"You are both like children," Bauman said, laughing, "like your Lyosha here. Razin, too, flares up at every little thing. If you only saw him arguing with the Narodniks! That's when the feathers fly."

"Feathers?" Lusya asked, her eyes softening. "And you think..."

Bauman's eyelids closed heavily. He reeled and sat on a sofa. Lusya bent over him in alarm:

"Are you hurt?"

He shook his head:

"No. I'm simply tired. It's disgraceful being tired like this, though we haven't slept for two days—and I spent a long time getting here..."

He slowly stretched his legs on the sofa and rested his damp, dishevelled head on the pillow.

"Comrade!" Kirill called, but Bauman did not reply. He was fast asleep. Kirill looked questioningly at Kozuba.

"What are we going to do now, Comrade Kozuba?" he asked. "We can't leave him here like that. He'd be recognized the instant a search party came in. We should have shaved him and given him a hair-cut—that beard especially should have been shaved off. It would make his face quite different."

"Let him sleep," Kozuba said, waving Kirill aside. "You can see the man's dead beat. Suppose you do give him a shave and a hair-cut. If they find him tonight—tired out as he is—do you think they won't realize who this gentleman is? When a man's asleep he's easily taken. A sleeping man is as good as a dead man. And look at the palms of his hands, covered with blood! Could he have seared them on a rope, or what? They'll recognize him, all right!" He looked affectionately at the sleeper's peaceful face. "The thing we really should do is to take off his clothes—shoes first of all."

"Well, I don't know," Lusya said thoughtfully, "I brought a pair of shoes in case they were needed, but Razin (at the mention of the name she again frowned and sighed) has a smaller foot."

"Rubbish!" Kozuba cut her short. "A thimble can be worn on the nose if need be. Give me the shoes and go and put Lyosha to bed. There's nothing else you can do now."

Lusya looked at the clock:

"I think we ought to warn Nadya that he's here. I'll tuck Lyosha in and then go. All right? No one will suspect me. And that will save troubling him. Aren't I right?"

"Yes," Kozuba agreed. "It's very important for a man to have his sleep. When he's refreshed he can get the moon for you. Yes, go ahead. The more so since we're going to undress him."

Kozuba resolutely pulled the torn shoe off Bauman's foot.

"Raise him a bit—carefully Kirill—we've got to get the trousers off him."

Lusya took Lyosha by the hand. The boy was staring wide-eyed at Bauman.

They left the room. Kozuba and Kirill were already pulling the dirty torn clothing off Bauman.

. . . . . .

Broad shafts of moonlight falling through the window made bright stripes on the floor as soon as the lamp grew dim. Again it was bright in the room—perhaps brighter than when the lamp had been burning.

Bauman in a new shirt slept soundly, covered over with a light piqué bedspread.

He did not hear the door slowly opening and Lyosha tiptoeing in barefooted. The boy crossed the room, which seemed enormous to him in the moonlight, reached the head of the bed and, facing the door, placed a fierce wooden Nut-cracker, with bared teeth and a naked sword in its hand, on the floor:

"Now no one will disturb him," Lyosha said, going out.

## *Chapter XL*

## A MYSTERIOUS BOX

The weather was inclement that morning. That was rare in Kiev in September when the entire city was usual-

ly brightly specked with yellow-red leaves. Extraordinary, too, was the incident that took place that dull, rainy morning.

In the square before Sofia Cathedral, at the foot of the monument to Bogdan Khmelnitsky,* a police patrol, made up of a sergeant and two constables, found a small wooden box with the following inscription on it in bold letters:

*Kiev Gubernia Police Department*

*CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT NOVITSKY*

*Personal*

The word "personal" was underlined twice, with a double black line.

The policemen shrank back from the box the minute the sergeant had falteringly made out the words. If it was addressed to the police department and personally to the head of that department, the box could contain only one thing—a bomb or a stick of dynamite. They had had a case like that last year, when the Anarchists left a box in the street. It had exploded at the police station as soon as they started pulling out the nails.

The sergeant detailed one of the constables to guard the box and to let no one near it, and dashed off to the station. At the corner of the street he met a beautiful young woman leading a little boy by the hand. The woman laughed when the police sergeant raced past her, his shining jackboots creaking. The woman's laughter almost brought the sergeant to a stop. It seemed suspicious to him that a respectable woman should be walking

* Bogdan Khmelnitsky was an outstanding Ukrainian statesman and military leader, who headed the national-liberation struggle of the Ukrainian people in 1648-54. The people fought to free themselves from the yoke of the Polish landlords and for reunion with the fraternal Russian people.—*Ed.*

in the square at six o'clock in the morning. By rights he should have asked her to accompany him to the station to explain. But the thought of the mysterious box drove him on. Lusya stood for a while longer and then, convinced that the policeman was not going to move away from the box, picked Lyosha up in her arms and pointed to the statue of Bogdan Khmelnitsky.

"That's the hetman. Look."

They then walked round the cathedral, past the bishop's chambers.

All the police stations were already being notified by telephone of the find. By order of the police commissioner the square was immediately cordoned off—the bomb could explode if for example a cart were to drive close by. Generally speaking the fewer curious people about in such cases the better.

In the cordoned off square, besides the police chiefs, there were an artillery expert, sent expressly from army headquarters by special request of the commissioner of police; three high-ranking police officers from the gubernia department; the assistant public prosecutor; and the mayor, a merchant of the first guild, bearded and hard of hearing, who owned a sugar refinery. He had sped to the square on his prize-winning trotter the minute he learned about the mysterious box. The mayor loved sensations; he never missed a single fire; his servants had standing orders to wake him up at any time of the night whenever an alarm was sounded in the fire-tower. He had been awakened this time, too; an explosion was far more exciting than any fire.

The fire brigade was also called out, in case it might be needed. The men stood by in full readiness near the government office building. The various chiefs were gathered at the corner near the cathedral some distance

from the monument; from there the lethal box looked like a white spot beside the cast-iron railing.

"They couldn't have picked a better spot!" said the mayor, shaking his head reproachfully, and following with his eyes the artillery expert, who, with two soldiers, was striding across the square towards the monument. The expert walked in his civilian clothes with his breast bravely thrust forward, but his step was feeble. "They couldn't have picked a better spot, I say! You've got everything here—the offices, Mikhailovsky Monastery, Sofia Cathedral. If it explodes it will blow off all the fifteen cathedral domes."

"It won't explode," said the commissioner of police. "The artillery department will see to that. The expert will make it harmless scientifically, you may be sure. There won't be any firing. Watch him doing it there."

The artillery officer was already bending over the box; in his hand he held some shiny instruments; the soldiers squatted beside him.

"What brave men soldiers are!" the assistant public prosecutor sang out in a syrupy tenor.

"He's lighting a cigarette!" said a police official, rousing himself. "He's lighting a cigarette, look! That means there's no danger."

To be sure, the artillery officer had straightened up and was striking a match. A moment later he exhaled a thin stream of blue smoke. More assuring was the behaviour of the soldiers; they turned the box over and unceremoniously put their hands into it.

"A false alarm!" the chiefs said in disappointment and trooped across the square to the artillery officer.

When they reached him the officer gave the open box a contemptuous kick.

"It's harmless. There's nothing but a lot of lead scrap The lance-corporal here assures me that its type."

One of the soldiers brought his out-spread palm to his cap in a salute:

"Yes, sir. As a former type-setter I can say it's type."

"Type?" The police officials craned their necks forward. "The man's right, inspector. It's type."

"It's worn down so much you can't make the letters out. Is this an E, F, or a T?"

"There's a trick behind all this," the police inspector pronounced thoughtfully, turning the letters over in his hand. "Have you looked carefully? Perhaps this junk is covering something nasty."

"We've shaken the box, inspector," the artillery officer calmed him. "There's nothing but type, with this letter on top."

The inspector carefully took the envelope from the officer. The address read:

*Chief Superintendent Novitsky*
*KIEV GUBERNIA POLICE DEPARTMENT*

*Personal*

"You think there's nothing in it that could explode? There have been such incidents, you know; thing's even sent by post."

The artillery officer flicked his fingers along the envelope:

"I've examined it. There aren't any explosives. If you have any misgivings perhaps you'll give me permission to open it?"

He ripped open the envelope without waiting for a reply and pulled out a yellowish sheet of paper folded in four.

"Is it printed?"

The inspector, wrinkling his forehead, unfolded the sheet.

## FROM THE KIEV COMMITTEE OF THE RUSSIAN SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC LABOUR PARTY

The mayor looked away. The faces of the others darkened; they remembered an unpleasant incident that was only three weeks old. On August 18 eleven political prisoners had escaped from a prison. One of them, a Narodnik, had been captured some distance from Kiev, but the others had disappeared leaving no trace. The ten men were all Social-Democrats and supporters of the *Iskra*.

The get-away had made the entire police department groan, it made "His Majesty, the Emperor," groan, and the world would have exclaimed in wonder—if it had been informed of this highly secret incident.

"Is it about the prison break?" the assistant public prosecutor asked glumly. "Again? There have already been two proclamations..."

"And there'll be twenty-two more!" the inspector said caustically, unable to hide his malicious joy.

The prison was under the jurisdiction of the Ministry for Justice and not of the Ministry for the Interior. Every blunder by one ministry was greeted with high delight by the others. The escape by the political prisoners was a nation-wide scandal. Why not gloat and jeer over someone else's disgrace? Besides all else, this business had definitely cost the Police Department one hundred thousand rubles. That alone was more than enough to raise a shindy about.

"Well, Vladimir Georgievich, will you please read what is written there."

"I'm a little at a loss to see what it is all about. It looks as though it's a letter congratulating His Excellency on his twenty-fifth anniversary of service..."

"You don't say so!" the mayor exclaimed and, throwing aside his dignity, slapped his knee. "It can't be true!

Though, as a matter of fact, His Excellency *is* celebrating the occasion today."

"Congratulations?" the assistant public prosecutor drawled and bent his weak-sighted spectacled eyes over the sheet in the inspector's hands. "Interesting! Permit me to read it."

"Aloud!" the mayor pleaded and cupped his palm over his ear-phone. "We're all friends here, one might say."

The artillery officer scowled and waved his hand at the soldiers. They wheeled round sharply, smartly clicked their heels and marched off towards the fire brigade. The assistant public prosecutor was already reading, and the more he read the louder and more malicious grew his voice.

"Chief Superintendent Novitsky,

"We have learned that you, Your Excellency, intend to resign the post at which you have done your duty so gloriously for a quarter of a century. This causes us profound sorrow..."

"Fiddlesticks, you can see that for yourselves," the inspector barked and tried to take the sheet from the tenacious fingers of the assistant public prosecutor. "It's a waste of time reading it."

"That's an old one!" the assistant public prosecutor chuckled. He hadn't the slightest intention of concealing his mirth. "We've already read about this business of 'wasting time' in something Gogol wrote. Please be so good as not to interrupt."

He continued reading, his voice rising higher and higher:

"...While arresting many thousands of innocent persons you have systematically avoided touching us, the members of the Social-Democratic Party. Our new print-

shop has been in existence now for almost four years; you have searched not less than a thousand houses, but you have always contrived to search those houses where the printshop never was nor could be. Peaceful people talk of you with horror and hatred. . ."

"I'm sorry!" the inspector said angrily, resolutely covering the sheet with his hand. This is not to be made public. And you, as a representative of the law, should know and remember it. Allow me!"

The sheet returned to the hands of the inspector. He folded it and his frown vanished. But that same instant his face twitched angrily; in the hands of a sub-inspector he saw an identical sheet of paper.

"Where did you get that from?" he asked hoarsely.

The sub-inspector guiltily looked away.

"It's pasted all over the city—I mean it was!" he hastily corrected himself. "I expect by now the leaflets have all been torn down."

"I can imagine!" the inspector drawled. "I know how your men tear them down. For every one they see there are ten they do not."

The inspector was right. Even here, a few steps away from the square, underground announcements printed on yellowish paper had been pasted in the yard of the cathedral, on the white wall of the Mikhailovsky Monastery and in Desyatinnaya Street. Crowds of workingmen, pedlars, and others of the "common herd," while on their way to work, had already gathered round the leaflets and were laughing.

". . . You helped us to gain our feet, become strong and expand our activity to its present scope. We are deeply grateful to you for your services and send you, as a remembrance, the old, worn type from our printshop. . ."

"That's true!" one of the readers said. "You can see this leaflet was printed with new type."

"Have you read the papers?" another asked. "It's Novitsky's jubilee today. The congratulation is timely!"

"They've even added a present. The box is heavy, most likely."

"They won't show it to him," a pedlar said sceptically, moving away. "They wouldn't distress His Excellency on such a day."

Pains had in fact been taken to prevent anything from distressing His Excellency. There was no sign of the yellow-coloured leaflet on the silver plate among the congratulatory telegrams and letters awaiting Novitsky and his wife, who were still in their bedroom. The leaflet had been added to the case files of the department. But the post office had committed one oversight. And the edge of a flippant postcard covered with red roses was even now peeping out from under the pile of neatly folded telegraph forms and official-looking stamped and numbered envelopes.

Novitsky, standing over the congratulatory letters in pleasant festive mood, first pulled out the flowery postcard. One glance made him raise his eyebrows in embarrassment and pain. The postcard bore a Swiss stamp. The text was short:

"Having gathered at the *Under the Gold Star* Restaurant to celebrate our safe arrival in Zurich, out of *your* reach, we deem it necessary to inform you of the fact and to add that in the near future we—the same number as before—will return to work in Russia."

Then followed the signatures in the same order as they had stood in the inscription on the wall of the Lukyanovka.

# Part Two

## *Chapter I*

## THE "ARTESIAN WELL" PASSPORT

In December 1903 the tsarist Police Department received from one of its agent-provocateurs working among the émigrés in Switzerland the following coded telegram:

*Bauman left for Moscow with extraordinary powers stop German passport in name Wilhelm Zempfeg stop*

. . . . . .

The floor was covered with spit and dirty thawing snow from the soles of boots; the walls were low and grimy; the ceiling cracked and dingy; the broken-down balustrade, which had once been varnished, was now hopelessly beyond repair; the customs officials were unfriendly; and police officers of all ranks were standing by the walls, doors and corners; they were stationed in a way that made everyone entering this frontier railway station of the Russian empire feel as though he were under arrest.

Foreigners did not experience the feeling because the customs officials reserved their insolence for subjects of the tsar; they were positively servile towards subjects of the King of England or the German Emperor.

And, now, among the people waiting near the balustrade for their passports to be returned to them, one could

unerringly distinguish between the Russian returning to his beloved homeland and the foreigner on a visit. The foreigners had a proud and independent mien.

All the more surprising was it, therefore, both for the Russians and the foreigners, when a police officer, holding a packet of examined passports, scrutinized the crowd and called out, as he named one of the documents which he held open in his hand:

"Mr. Arthur-Wilhelm-Maria Ziegler of Munich!"

A summons of this kind was made only when there was something wrong with the passport. The people at the station whispered among themselves and began looking round.

A round-shouldered man with dark hair—obviously a foreigner—languidly rolled his cigar from the left to the right side of his mouth:

"*Nun was?*"*

The policeman brought his white-gloved hand to his blue cap:

"Mr. Ziegler? Please follow me."

The policeman's lips formed into a smile under his sharp-pointed moustache; it portended nothing pleasant and the policeman was so frank about it that the people standing round Ziegler hastily moved away while one man—plainly a simpleton—put into words what was in everyone's mind.

"He's a goner!" he shouted out.

A second policeman obligingly threw back a cross-piece in the balustrade to let Ziegler through.

The German puffed at his cigar and walked in nonchalantly; instantly two more men in blue uniforms appeared behind him. At a sign from one of the policemen, a porter followed them, carrying a heavy suit-case that had already been through the customs.

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* "What is it?"—*Tr.*

The entire crowd at the station soberly watched the procession. Bauman's eyes were stern, too, as they followed his disappearing comrade.

He and Lengnik had taken every precaution when they left Geneva. Lengnik was a member of the Central Committee, and one of the first to support the *Iskra*. He had been in the working-class movement since the 1890's and was experienced in underground work.

Bauman had not yet had his passport returned to him; he would know where he stood as soon as his name was called out.

When Lengnik and his escort entered the frontier guard office at the station there was hardly any elbow room in it. The rumour that a man had been detained had evidently spread quickly; various station employees with a weakness for anything untoward packed the room. A police inspector, his grey-streaked red hair closely cropped, making it difficult to guess his age, was already writing something on a printed protocol form, on which the letters started with:

"I . . . of the Secret Police. . ."

He screwed up his eyes as though sizing up Lengnik, who had approached his desk. Then he raised one corner of his upper lip, expressing scorn.

"Well, just as I thought! So this is Arthur! What did you say the surname was?"

Lengnik moved his eyes over the men round him, glanced at the inspector and growled through the cigar in his mouth:

"*Familienname, was? Da steht's ja geschrieben!*"*

He indicated the passport with a movement of his chin; it lay open before the inspector where the policeman, who had brought Lengnik in, had carefully placed

* "My name? It's written there!"—*Tr.*

it. The onlookers exchanged glances at his words. He spoke like a real German, with a Bavarian accent and with that fastidious indifference with which foreigners usually addressed Russian officials. What if he really was a German subject?

The inspector's face grew purple; the same thought had entered his own mind. The name in the warning telegnam from the Department of Police was Zempfeg. None of the passports had been made out in that name. But there was the passport belonging to this Ziegler. A mistake was always possible in a coded telegnam. But for all that Zempfeg and Ziegler were not really so very much alike. The first names, too, were different; Zempfeg was called simply Wilhelm, while this man was called Arthur-Wilhelm. He really looked like a German.

The inspector's penetrating eyes seemed to drill through Lengnik. He was positive the man was pretending. His neck took on a darker hue as he bellowed:

"I would trouble you to explain in Russian!"

What happened after that was not provided for in police instructions or in secret service practice; the Bavarian took the cigar out of his mouth, raised his eyebrows, and asked very distinctly without addressing anyone in particular:

"*Was fällt dem Kerl ein*?"*

He added another phrase, so stinging that everyone understood it, even those who knew no German. Then he put out his arm and calmly picked up his passport from the desk.

"Interpreter!" the inspector yelled hoarsely. "Where the hell is he hiding?"

"Inspector, the train is due to leave in five minutes," the senior conductor put in apprehensively.

The inspector threw a glance at the pile of passports on his desk. They still had to be examined. He motioned

* "What's the fellow thinking of?"—*Tr.*

to a police sergeant and began quickly turning over the pages of the passports and shoving them one after another into the sergeant's broad palm.

Ziegler was about to turn, but the policemen behind him blocked the way, while one of the customs officials in a neat black jacket with green edging explained in poor but understandable German that he would have to wait as there were certain formalities to be seen to. At that point the interpreter came up.

He was a lean man with shifty eyes. But he spoke German fluently and made a great show of his pronunciation.

The inspector cheered up. The interrogation began.

"He says," the interpreter reported, "that he was born in Nuremberg, lived in Strasbourg, latterly in Munich. By profession he is a driller, an expert on arterian..."

"Artesian," the customs official, who understood German, corrected him. He, too, was listening attentively.

"...artesian wells. He's going to Moscow for the purpose."

"Oho!" the inspector roused himself gleefully. "He's lying already! Wells in Moscow? They've got water laid on there? Moscow, though in retirement, is the capital all the same."

The interpreter began to talk rapidly; the inspector's excitement had infected him. He seemed to bark out his words like a hound on the scent. But before the German could reply the customs official bent over the inspector and whispered:

"Excuse me, inspector, but I think you're making a mistake. I've worked in an office at the mint in St. Petersburg and I can tell you that they've got artesian wells even there."

The inspector's moustache twitched in vexation, but immediately he pulled himself together.

"Maybe they do drill artesian wells, but this man doesn't, I'll stake my head on it! We'll show him up in a

minute. Yes, yes, Mister!" He looked up at Ziegler. "I'm telling you straight to your face, frankly, and you understand perfectly well what I'm saying though you pretend you know no Russian. Here, Manykin, let him tell us in his own words what an artesian well is."

"I've got to signal the train off!" the senior conductor pleaded. "If he's going to start talking about drilling... Must we hold the train up?"

"You'll wait," the inspector said, waving him aside. "Don't hurry me. State interests are involved here. Well, what's he saying?"

Ziegler had again said something caustic, for the men about him had begun to titter and even the interpreter grinned.

"Well, what's he saying, I'm asking you?" the inspector repeated grimly.

For a moment the interpreter hesitated.

"He says he's surprised that a tsarist police inspector does not know what an artesian well is."

"You're lying. He said something else," said the inspector with a shake of the head and addressed Ziegler directly. "If I hadn't known I wouldn't have asked. Is that clear? How can I put you to the test if I don't know what I'm talking about? Please take the trouble to explain."

Ziegler shrugged his shoulders after the interpreter had repeated the inspector's words and began to talk in a monotonous voice. The interpreter's voice, too, grew monotonous:

"An artesian well is a well from which water flows under pressure, to translate it literally. It is made by boring, the method depends on—how to say it?—geologisch... All these words are very specialized, inspector!"

The German continued talking. The customs official nodded, adjusted his jacket, and walked out. He was followed by the others. They had lost all interest in the

conversation. It was quite obvious that the inspector was barking up the wrong tree.

But he still stuck to his guns. Pompously he listened to the mumbling of the interpreter:

"The final diameter of the bore and the diameter of the filter depend on the desired yield and the depth. A filter is used if..."

The interpreter wiped his brow. Ziegler's voice was flat and unhurried, and he spoke, pulling on his cigar.

"... if the water-bearing layer is sandy. The water is raised by pumps of various systems..."

The inspector made a convulsive movement with his hand like a drowning man clutching at a straw.

"Various? That won't do! Be so good as to tell me precisely which."

Ziegler gave the inspector a disgusted look after hearing the interpreter's words. The reply he made was definitely devastating.

"When the water level is high and it falls slowly during pumping we use a centrifugal Farko type pump with a vertical axis. When the level is very low, a Lammut compressor pump is used. Personally I am an expert on the system invented by engineer Rakki. I'm going to Moscow to join the engineering office of engineer-technologist Tsukhanov, which specializes in this system. I have a recommendation from Rakki."

Ziegler, with the same indifference as before, pulled from his pocket an envelope of thick glossy paper with the name of a German firm stamped on it. But the inspector was no longer looking in his direction; he was deeply engrossed in some papers as though there had been no lengthy conversation and Ziegler were not standing before him. The senior conductor hurried out of the room, pulling out his whistle.

Meanwhile Bauman was waiting, pacing up and down by the side of the railway carriages. His passport had

been returned to him—without complications. True, the passport was made out in the name of one Dolganov, aulic councillor (the rank itself inspired respect) and the visa was so clearly stamped that it precluded any idea on the part of the police that it might be counterfeit. It was for this reason that he had shown this passport and not the one made out in the name of Zempfeg. On leaving Geneva he had noticed an error in the Zempfeg passport; it was trivial enough in itself, but there was just the chance that the experienced eye of the frontier guard might spot it.

A porter hurried past, carrying a suit-case that looked familiar to Bauman. Ziegler-Lengnik followed, calmly smoking a fresh cigar. He walked slowly and with dignity, in the correct manner of a foreigner who held himself and his country in high esteem. And this, in spite of the fact that the third whistle was already being blown.

Lengnik boarded the carriage next to that in which Bauman was travelling.

Two hours later, as previously arranged, they met outside the lavatory, towels slung over their shoulders and soap-boxes in their hands. It was already night; the corridor was deserted; the lavatory was not occupied.

"See how pedantic you have to be in this business?" Lengnik said laughing. "If I hadn't read something about artesian wells and you hadn't written that recommendation from Rakki I would definitely have been in the soup."

## *Chapter II*

## MICROBES

Lengnik left the train before it reached Moscow; he was bound for the north. Bauman arrived alone in the "city of the throne."

He stopped in the Hotel Paris, presenting the Zempfeg passport. Apart from the advantages accruing to a

foreign passport when staying in a hotel, Bauman generally adhered to the rule about "changing documents," so as not to leave behind a "continuous" trail. When two or three documents were used simultaneously, even the most skilful surveillance would not immediately reveal that they all concerned one and the same person.

But already on the second day after he had presented his passport at the hotel desk for registration, he felt that something was wrong; there was something about the way the man-servant darted his eyes about and studiously turned his head, the scared look of the chambermaid and the way his comings and goings were watched by the manager in his glass-fronted office and by the fat uniformed porter.

He spent the whole day walking about the streets, entering houses on the way and changing from one horse tram to another. All the way he was shadowed so doggedly, insistently, even openly that the youngest recruit in the business could not help but notice it. This was the more surprising since from the time of his arrival Bauman had visited no Party address, nor had he seen anyone. He concluded that his being kept under observation was something to do with the passport. He was positive that he had not been followed from the railway station.

The worst of it was that when he returned to the hotel he noticed a police inspector in the office, although when he approached the door was slammed. Without going to his room he sent a hotel messenger out for a ticket to the Maly Theatre, ordered dinner to be served in his room and, while his orders were being attended to, took from his suit-case everything he could carry away on himself, in his pockets or otherwise. He left the theatre during the first act and, "covering up his tracks," found himself by ten o'clock in the Sokolniki Park. This time there was no one shadowing him.

Naturally it would have been foolish to return to the hotel; everything pointed to the fact that preparations had been made to arrest him the same night. If he went to another hotel without luggage he would arouse suspicion, especially if he presented his "aulic councillor's" passport with the foreign visa.

He turned over in his mind the addresses given him in Geneva and decided upon the address of a doctor in an out-of-the-way turning off Arbat Street. He knew these turnings from his previous visit to Moscow. There had always been a dreamy stillness about them; even the air was somehow motionless; and if anyone were to follow him there, Bauman was sure that stillness would drive him away. And now, remembering the impression the turning had previously made upon him, Bauman decided that of all addresses this one was the safest and most convenient for a night's lodging.

That winter the back streets proved just as deserted, only in the middle the snow was piled higher and there seemed to be fewer lanterns blinking from the crooked wooden posts that had not seen the paint brush for years. He found the house without difficulty. It was grey, one-storeyed, and had an attic. The door was bound with green cloth of good quality; on a brightly polished brass plate was the doctor's name, and below—the legend: bacteriologist.

A woman, still young-looking, opened the door. She said the doctor was in, but there was distrust and hostility in her eyes, and Bauman wondered whether it would not be better to go away. The woman was clearly an outsider. It was equally clear that she was annoyed because of this late, midnight visitor.

But the doctor, who appeared in the hall in answer to the woman's call, looked so good-natured and charming, his fluffy fair hair stuck out so absurdly round the small bald patch on top of his head, his thick beard, which

seemed somehow not to belong to him, was so tousled, and his eyes peering through gold-rimmed spectacles were so gentle and trusting, that Bauman did not trouble to give the password (especially as the woman was still there and watching him with a hostile stare). He simply gave the doctor's broad hand a warm shake and asked:

"Which way?" to which the doctor replied with a merry chuckle:

"Why here, of course!" and opened the door into a room.

A heavy, pungent smell of animal life came through the door. It was like the Zoo in winter when the animals are kept in poorly ventilated cages.

Here, too, there were cages: large and small, singly and in tiers they stood against the walls and even across the room. Before him Bauman saw rabbits, guinea-pigs, pigeons, white mice, and white rats with delicate, pink tails (not at all like the tails of the brown rats in the Lukyanovka prison).

"What do you keep them for?"

But instead of answering the doctor recalled Bauman to business:

"Excuse me, but tell me..."

Of course! Bauman remembered to give the password and then they shook hands again.

"If you wish to spend the night here, you're welcome. Take your coat off and make yourself at home. It smells a little here. But unfortunately at the moment I can't offer you any other room. With your permission we'll make you up a bed here."

He went to an oilskin-covered sofa standing between the cages and pressed on the seat; the taut springs creaked and the doctor's hand rebounded.

"You see it's well sprung," he said, nodding his head in satisfaction. "D'you think you'll be comfortable?"

"I'm sure of it," Bauman nodded and continued inspecting the room. "But you still haven't explained the menagerie!"

The doctor surveyed the room affectionately:

"You see, I'm a bacteriologist."

But Bauman did not grasp the connection:

"But what have animals to do with it?"

"Oh! Well I use them for my experiments. Here, I'll show you."

He went to a desk. There stood test-tubes, retorts, hypodermic syringes, and a microscope.

"Injections?"

"Yes."

He touched the cage nearest to him. Behind the thin wire netting was a guinea-pig lying motionless, all its four little paws bent under it. Its fur was standing on end and the muzzle was despondently lowered to the pungent straw bedding.

"Is it sick?" Bauman asked, lowering his voice.

The doctor nodded.

"Poisoned. Diphtheria."

Bauman looked intently at the guinea-pig, his face almost against the netting. The guinea-pig did not respond; it was past caring. Bauman straightened his back.

"It's a wonderful science, this chemistry of microbes."

"Interesting, too," the doctor said in an undertone. "As a matter of fact it is the most interesting thing in the world. Essentially there isn't a more terrible enemy than the one which moves about and seeks whom to poison."

"All this must be worth a tidy sum of money. Are you interested only in diphtheria?

"Cholera," the doctor replied. "And..."

"But why do you go in for such a lot?"

The doctor moved his shoulders. The question made him feel uncomfortable.

"I do a little selling," he said. "There is a big demand for such material in the provinces. And the only sources of supply are private laboratories like mine. The government does not trouble itself about it. The treasury, you know, is interested only in selling vodka."

"Strange!" Bauman shook his head. "Very strange indeed for the tsarist government to trust private persons with this sort of thing."

"Why shouldn't it?" the doctor asked guardedly, and Bauman read in the doctor's eyes that he was well aware of the answer.

But Bauman gave the answer all the same:

"In *Conrad Vallenrod* Mickiewicz has an introductory ballad about a Moorish Almansour, who was defeated by the Spaniards and who avenged himself by infecting their camp with cholera. It proved stronger than any other weapon.

*The Spaniards fled from the mountains in fright*
*And hosts of them fell on the way;*
*The dying and dead were a horrible sight,*
*As the Plague took their spirits away.*

"Yes, stronger than any other weapon," the doctor agreed. "But not against palaces. An epidemic first of all spreads to the poorest quarters and touches those whose bodies have been weakened by continual undernourishment. Death always follows the line of least resistance."

Bauman put his hand on the doctor's impulsively.

"That was well put. It's very true that death always follows the line of least resistance. But when we get the upper hand death will find his match in the human race, you can be sure."

"You think so? Unfortunately I believe (not to say bluntly that I am sure) that you and I will yet live to see germ war on the lines of your Almansour, the only essential difference being that the future Almansours will

drop retorts full of germs from the air." The doctor stopped abruptly and shook his head in self-reproach. "Here I am going off into a discussion when you're probably chilled to the marrow. There's a frost today. We'll warm you up with a glass of tea."

He left the room. Bauman sat down on the sofa.

It was curious that the thought of the tremendous and merciless struggle that lay before him should come to his mind most vividly just at this moment. He had never felt it all so keenly either in his early manhood when just starting out on his revolutionary road or in St. Petersburg; even later—in the Peter and Paul Fortress, while in exile in Vyatka, and during his work abroad and his talks with Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, he had never seen it all so clearly.

Germ war? Between the two worlds that the *class* war was bringing on to the field of battle there was no reconciliation nor could there be. In it, the enemy of the working people, the capitalist exploiter, would resort to every means, even cholera, in order to prolong his power.

Bauman got up, stretched, and began to pace the floor.

He had hardly made two turns when the door opened and a woman appeared on the threshold. Her face seemed familiar, but he could not immediately place her.

His hesitation lasted for no more than a second. He remembered the 1902 strike at the Proshin Mill in the Moscow suburbs. It was Irina.

She came up to him, smiling and a little flushed with emotion:

"This is a surprise! I didn't for a moment expect it would be you. I couldn't get anything out of the doctor. You wouldn't believe how secretive he is. All he said was that a man had come to see him, 'an ordinary man.' "

"He's quite right," Bauman interrupted her, shaking her hand. "There's certainly nothing extraordinary about me! But tell me, how did you know it was me?"

"I peeped through the keyhole," Irina laughed. "I had to wait a little, because the sofa can't be seen from the keyhole and you were sitting on the sofa. I was quite sure that if you were one of us you wouldn't sit down for long like a sack of flour. I was sure of it. I knew you'd start walking about. Finally, I heard you get up. Then I caught sight of you and naturally recognized you at once."

"But who told you that I'd come?"

"Marya Pavlovna."

"Marya Pavlovna? Is she the doctor's wife? Is she..."

"A Party member? No." Irina shook her head. "The doctor isn't either, you know. He's a bacteriologist, you understand. But he is a sympathizer. Of all the addresses this is the very best. We've been using it for a long time. But how wonderful that you've come! And that we've met. You know, I almost went home. I came to tell the doctor that Kozuba..."

"Oho!" Bauman exclaimed joyfully. "Is Kozuba here, too? I thought he was in Kiev."

"The Mensheviks made Kiev too hot for him." Irina frowned. "You know, I'm sure, that they are not letting our people work and think nothing of tipping the police off about us. Kozuba was driven out not so much by the police as by the Mensheviks. However, he did not let that bother him too much; he prefers Moscow. But here, too, the Mensheviks have got the upper hand. Under their control the *Iskra* is doing a lot of damage. The people had got used to the *Iskra* while Lenin was in charge—they knew they could believe every word. But now, though the workers are sometimes surprised at how much the newspaper has changed, they still continue to heed every word. The Mensheviks have not told the workers that Lenin is no longer connected with it."

"Don't worry, the workers will sort it out for themselves," said Bauman and smiled. "But how is it you are

in Moscow? When I was in Kiev Kozuba told me you had been arrested and sent into exile in Eastern Siberia."

"Don't you remember telling Kozuba that people escape even from exile? You told him so the first night you came to the Proshin Mill and he is always repeating it. Well, if people can escape from exile, then it must be child's play to escape on the way there. I only got as far as Vologda and there the lads helped me to wriggle out. I'm now a real political worker, Comrade Rook! I'm on an il-le-gal footing! I did some work in Saratov, then I moved here. I'm staying in Kolomna now."

"Don't you go to the Committee?"

"The Moscow Committee? Oh, no! The Mensheviks are on it."

"Wait a minute!" Bauman's face darkened. "Do you mean to tell me that none of our people are on the Committee?"

"Only Kozuba. They could not help themselves in his case; he's got the backing of all the Prokhorov Mill workers—he is working there, you know. Legally, too! Under the name of Nikolai Nikolayevich Grachov. You apparently have the lucky touch; I don't suppose you've forgotten that you christened him."

"Do you know where he lives?"

Irina thought for a second.

"I'll tell you what... It would be imprudent to go to see him now. But I'll take you to him in the morning. I'll do that, I promise. The Committee is having a meeting tomorrow. I think you should talk matters over with him before it starts."

"All right," Bauman nodded. "But where shall we meet tomorrow?"

"Here, of course!" Irina smiled. "I shall simply stay for the night. Marya Pavlovna will not grudge me that; she's very kind to me. There's still plenty of time before we turn in; meanwhile I'll give you all the latest news.

It is very difficult working here, Comrade... Nikolai. On the one hand there are the Mensheviks. Incidentally, Gustylyov from the Proshin Mill is also here. He's become quite an important person, what with his talents! On the other hand there's the *zubatovshchina**; the secret service is very active among the workers. They're playing the same game as the Mensheviks—strangling the revolution."

"Hold on. Didn't Zubatov get the boot last year?"

Irina sighed:

"Zubatov himself is gone, but the *zubatovshchina* is still here. Then I'm not very sure about Zubatov getting the boot; people say he's in Police Department."

The door opened. The doctor appeared.

"You know each other, I see. Well, then, let's go into the dining-room and have some tea if you insist on throwing conspiracy to the winds."

## *Chapter III*

## THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The address of the Committee given him by Kozuba proved again to be a house belonging to a medical man, this time a dentist. Underground workers readily used such addresses; one could always pass as a "patient" without rousing the suspicions of either the hall porter or the servants. Moreover, there was the advantage that the host would not be put under suspicion; a doctor was not responsible for the people who came to see him, even

* *Zubatovshchina*—organizations set up by Zubatov, a high official in the secret police, who sought to propagate so-called "police socialism." He established sham workers' organizations under the aegis of the secret service and the police in order to distract the workers from the revolutionary movement.—*Ed.*

in cases when, as on this occasion, members of the Committee gathered at the dentist's on the fourth floor of a house on Bronnaya Street and held a meeting in the waiting-room. The dentist received his patients by appointment. How could anyone prove that the names on today's list were assumed as were all the notes in the diary for the day? Who could prove that he hadn't filled or treated any teeth at all and that it was all a screen for the regular meeting of the Moscow Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party?

The dentist insisted on his patients' making an appointment, but if even during the hours reserved by the Committee, a chance patient rang the bell, the doctor would answer him as he answered Bauman, who walked into the consulting-room at the hour indicated by Kozuba:

"I'm sorry, but I cannot receive you today; my appointment book is full also for the next few days. I shan't be able to receive you until the middle of next week."

By not giving the password Bauman compelled the dentist to make this little speech because he wanted to test the safety of the address.

The dentist had opened the door for him; these were the hours when the servants were off duty and he answered the bell himself in order to be sure that the password was given. Such formalities were rarely necessary as the doctor was a friend of Grigory Vasilyevich, the Secretary of the Committee, and knew all the members of the Committee by sight.

On this ocassion, however, a stranger had confronted him. The visitor had not given the password, but had merely looked round suspiciously and gazed up at the dentist with a twinkle in his eye when the latter growled in a mixture of fear and anger:

"I'm sorry."

"But perhaps, you would make an exception."

"By no means. Excuse me, but my patient is waiting." The dentist opened the door.

Bauman took off his coat:

"I'm from Marya Petrovna."

The dentist shut the door again.

"How is Marya Petrovna?" he murmured without raising his eyes.

"Quite all right, thank you!" Bauman said, unwinding his scarf. "Have you read the book entitled: *The Battle of the Russians with the Kabardinians* or *The Beautiful Mohammedan...*"

"... *Dying on the Coffin of Her Husband*," the dentist finished delightedly. "Why didn't you say it as soon as you came in? I was already thinking that... Are you a novice?"

"Yes," Bauman replied. "Do I go in there?"

He drew the curtain aside and passed into the waiting-room.

Five men were sitting round a table covered with a plush cloth. All were reading a magazine or a newspaper; people usually did that in waiting-rooms.

Four faces hid behind the magazines and newspapers when the new patient entered; four pairs of eyes concentrated on the printed columns. The fifth man did not lower his eyes. He was Gustylyov and he instantly recognized Bauman.

Bauman bowed from the door. His eyes were laughing as they had laughed just a minute ago in the hall. The men were comporting themselves conspiratorially, but he was ready to pledge his word that had he been an informer he would have known exactly *what* was taking place here.

"Excuse me, gentlemen. Who is the last?"

"Comrades," Gustylyov said tonelessly, and the paper screens moved aside, revealing surprised and wary faces,

"this is—a former delegate of the Moscow organization to the Second Party Congress, Comrade..."

"Sorokin," Bauman added hurriedly with another courteous bow. "I've been sent to the Moscow Committee."

"Your mandate?" Grigory Vasilyevich all but whispered, giving the newcomer a hostile glare. He knew that at the congress Sorokin was among the "staunchest" *Iskra* men, a Leninist. "You have a mandate, of course, Comrade Sorokin?"

Bauman nodded, took a penknife from his pocket, ripped the seam of his sleeve and drew out a narrow piece of cloth.

"A mandate from the Central Committee," the secretary said and exchanged glances with the others.

All five knew that Lenin was waging a fierce struggle in the Central Committee against Plekhanov and Martov, and for that reason they eyed the newcomer nervously. Who was he siding with?

In the Central Committee the Mensheviks held the strings and the mandate was genuine and correctly and officially made out. There were no grounds, therefore, for disputing it. Grigory Vasilyevich summed up his thoughts aloud:

"What do you think, comrades? Shall we consider Comrade Sorokin co-opted, as per the instructions of the Central Committee?"

No one answered. What if the newcomer belonged to "the other" camp after all? Grigory Vasilyevich brought the edge of the shred on which the mandate was written to the burning end of his cigarette; it smouldered, sending up a thin wisp of smoke, then curled up into ash and dropped into the ashtray.

"We shall ask the comrade to tell us about the situation in Party circles abroad. How true is the news that Lenin has been completely defeated? What is the extent,

so to speak, of his downfall? I dare say you saw Georgy Valentinovich Plekhanov before your departure?"

The question was patently provocative; actually it gave Bauman the right to answer with equal cunning. But he could not tolerate mud-slinging and intrigues in politics; that was the speciality of gentlemen like the Mensheviks here.

"I did not see Plekhanov. I saw Vladimir Ilyich Lenin."

"A Leninist!"

Bauman's words produced an unexpected and violent reaction. Grigory Vasilyevich seemed to be struck dumb. But the next moment the bell rang in the hall and Kozuba came in. He scrutinized the members of the Committee and demanded with a frown:

"Admit who brought an informer to this place? There is an informer at the entrance."

Bauman nodded:

"Wearing a lambskin hat with a crease at the top? I, too, saw him when I came up."

"The door slammed after me," Kozuba said, sucking the icicles on his moustache. "I believe he came in on my heels."

"But that's impossible!" Gustylyov and Grigory Vasilyevich cried out in unison. "Police agents are strictly forbidden to follow people into doorways so as not to reveal themselves."

"I know," Kozuba agreed. "But I think he's come in all the same."

The bell rang again in the hall: a faint uncertain tingle. Bauman smiled and shook his head:

"It strikes me you'll have to send in a complaint to the Police Department against agents' violating official instructions."

## *Chapter IV*

## A PATIENT

The informer did not press the bell immediately.

He had followed Kozuba into the building, but not because that heavy-set, bearded, elderly-looking worker in the trim padded jacket and cap had aroused his suspicions. The building was rather big, consisted of many inexpensive flats and there was no porter; various people lived here and it was quite possible, judging from his outward appearance, that the man was earning enough to pay for a flat in such a building. The informer had entered because the frost outdoors was getting keener, and he was finding it more and more necessary to rub his numbed ears and cheeks; the tight service shoes gave little protection to his toes—he had to hop about to keep them from freezing. It was warmer, warm in fact, in the hall and there was scarcely any danger of running into Cow's Death (the name by which Gustylyov was known to police spies and which was used in their reports), because this was not the first time he had been in the building and he had always remained in it for not less than two hours. Consequently...

He went in, straining his ears from force of professional habit to hear the sound of the workman's footsteps going up the stairs, and lit a cigarette. Suddenly the steps stopped, causing the informer to prick up his ears, because he thought the workman had stopped not on a landing but on the staircase. Was he trying to establish if he was being followed?

When the footsteps sounded again the informer's suspicions deepened. Only a political trouble-maker would stop to see if he was being followed. Therefore, this workman...

The informer's heart began to throb in anticipation of a chance to distinguish himself; the excitement of a chase gripped him.

He hurried up the stairs, stealthily keeping away from the railings to prevent anyone from seeing him from the upper landings. The steps of the workman had died away on the fourth floor. That was certain. The informer pressed closer to the wall, biding his time. A door slammed. He waited a moment longer, and went up.

There were three doors on the fourth-floor landing. On the first a wooden tablet read: Guards Colonel von der Palen. A workman would not go through that door; he could not expect anything from the colonel except to be thrown out! If he had been called in to do repairs he would have used the back door. It was improbable too that the workman had entered the second door; that flat belonged to an actress of the Imperial Ballet. The tablet on the third door bore the legend:

Dentist

*Wilhelm Ferdinandovich*

*V O G T*

**Reception hours: 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., except Tuesdays**

The pealing of church bells came from the street; they were ringing for the evening service. It was Saturday. Hence a reception day.

Was it worth risking?

The instructions explicitly forbade such a step. But the informer had been trained at a police school by Mednikov, one of the most skilful artists in the sleuthing business. From what he had learned, the informer standing in front of the polished door with the dentist's brass tablet was aware that instructions were one thing but one had also to use one's head.

"Do not give yourself away"—in the final count that was correct, but if there was an opportunity of unmasking another political criminal, and a workman to boot, and of discovering another secret address, what then? And if Cow's Death, too, proved to be there, then he had an excuse for what he was doing. Yes, it would make a really big case! The thought took his breath away.

Rapidly he formed his plan of action; then, he bared his head, took a handkerchief from his pocket (it was dirty—but who could have forseen such a contingency?), tied it round his cheek and pressed the bell, indecisively at first. When the door was not opened the suspicion that something was on foot in the flat, for information concerning which the secret service would pay good money, grew into certainty and he rang again, pressing hard on the bell button in the manner of a police search party.

The door was opened by the dentist in a white smock. The informer slipped into the hall and to his great joy saw among the many coats on the hallstand the padded jacket of the workman and Cow's Death overcoat; it was hanging by the collar, because the hanger had come off.

. . . . . .

The men in the waiting-room listened to the conversation in the hall. The dentist spoke in a shrill tone of voice obviously calculating on the warning being taken.

"They're arguing," Grigory Vasilyevich whispered anxiously. "D'you hear? You don't think the police are with him? We must do something."

But measures had already been taken. They had all taken seats in armchairs along the wall as though each were waiting his turn. All of them were reading a newspaper or a magazine.

Bauman remained at the table, bending over an open copy of the *Russkoye Slovo.*

The argument in the hall grew louder and louder. Then the voices faded away.

Bauman saw Gustylyov's brows jerk up in fright as the curtain moved slightly aside and an ungainly man sidled into the waiting-room; he wore a jacket and although his trousers were threadbare they were neatly pressed. Mednikov always impressed upon his corps that a sleuth should always see to his dress; his favourite words were: "A sleuth should always look and act as though he were a bridegroom."

With his hand on the dirty handkerchief round his cheek, the informer sat down gingerly on a gilded chair with spindly legs. It stood nearest to the hall door.

Silence filled the waiting-room. Everyone was absorbed in the newspapers and magazines except Kozuba; he was reclining on a small sofa, candidly staring at the informer. The cheek of the fellow! They could not let him get away with it!

The same thought was in Bauman's mind. He pretended he was engrossed in the classified advertisements on the front page of his newspaper.

At any other time they might indeed have seemed interesting. They dealt with the most vital things in life:

"A match-maker wanted by a gentleman. Offers to be addressed to the Central Post Office to bearer of hundred-ruble note No. 146588."

"Wanted: *Christian* doctor for a commercial school in Konotop."

The word "Christian" was printed in bold type: the make-up man knew his job all right!

Farther down there was a box:

"Breast armour, guaranteed as the best protection against bullet and knife wounds, as supplied already to many persons of high standing..."

That was what it said: "many persons of high standing..."

"...made by N. Reiser, formerly headmaster of a school of weavers in Aachen..."

Bauman kept one eye on the informer as he read these edifying advertisements. The informer realized it and the strain became too much for him: he began to fidget and groan. Bauman promptly looked up from the newspaper.

"Is it very painful?"

His voice was calm and sympathetic.

"Very painful," the informer moaned. "Haven't slept these last three nights. It's driving me mad!"

Bauman called across the room to Grigory Vasilyevich, who was sitting beside the door to the surgery from which came the hum of the drill (the dentist was pretending he had a patient in the chair):

"Excuse me, my dear sir. Is your turn next? I wonder if you would be so good as to let this gentleman go in before you? He's suffering badly from toothache."

"Of course, with pleasure," Grigory Vasilyevich responded somewhat too readily. "The more so since I have to have three fillings. It'll take a lot of time. If the other gentlemen do not object..."

"Heavens, no!" the informer cried; he was terrified, so much so that he placed his hands imploringly on his crumpled shirt-front. This turn of affairs was not to his taste. "Why should you give yourself so much trouble?"

"Christian charity," Kozuba growled from the sofa in a deep bass unlike his own voice. "Why not help a man?"

The door in the hall banged. Probably the dentist seeing out a patient. Such was the case for soon the door of the surgery opened; Vogt called for the next patient. Grigory Vasilyevich stood up. He was about to say something, but Bauman forestalled him:

"Doctor, we've agreed to give priority to this—gentleman," he pointed to the informer. "He's in a bad way and needs urgent help."

He looked the dentist straight in the eye; his left eyelid moved almost imperceptibly. The dentist nodded.

There were tiny wrinkles round his eyes; he had taken the hint.

"In that case, please come in," he said to the informer.

The informer rose but changed his mind and sank back into his seat.

"I'm very much obliged to you but I'll wait. I can wait, I assure you. It's not so bad now."

"Please come in," the dentist insisted sternly with a slight stamp of the foot. "You're holding up the others."

Mednikov had taught his men good manners. A sleuth must always look and act like a bridegroom. The informer crossed the room with a mincing gait; that, Mednikov had said, was the way people in highest society carried themselves. But the informer could not remember the French word that should accompany it: *couché, touché, fouché.* No, he could not remember it to save his life.

"Ché," he mumbled and dragged himself to the door.

The dentist let him through and turned to look back. Kozuba's lips formed the word:

"Informer."

Bauman added to this by showing with his fingers how people in that profession carry out their duties. The dentist grinned and followed the informer, his pink bald head shining.

Gustylyov got up:

"We must disperse immediately. While he's in there. I hope the dentist has the sense to detain him."

"Get that idea out of your head," Kozuba snapped. "If we disperse this address will be lost to us. You can bet he noticed the coats out in the hall. He made a mental note of them, you may be certain. An efficient informer this! Just imagine his landing here in the middle of a Committee meeting. If when he comes out of the surgery he finds all seven coats gone, he'd be a fool not to realize what's in the wind."

"Quite right," said a student, supporting Kozuba. "We must stay here and leave singly after the doctor has seen him out. In the meantime let's continue."

This was the first time the student had spoken. Bauman looked at him and smiled. An answering smile instantly lit up the student's face.

At a sign from the dentist the informer slipped into the dentist's chair. Mednikov's injunctions were: never lose your head. He had recovered from his initial scare, when it had seemed that everyone knew who he was and he would be booted out, but now, face to face with the dentist, he felt not merely at ease but even in good spirits. Perhaps, in the long run, it was better this way. He had counted the number of people in the waiting-room and had memorized their faces; he was confident he would be able to recognize them by their photographs. More than that, he had sufficient evidence for a report to the effect that a secret meeting had taken place at the dentist's. He could have gone without waiting for more.

He was feeling somewhat elated and from the depths of the soft, comfortable chair he was already happily running his eyes along the glass shelf with its odd instruments, the rough, white, plaster jaws on a small table standing to the right near the door, and the light, immobile wheel of the dentist's drill.

"Open your mouth. Wider!"

The informer obeyed the peremptory command, revealing two rows of faultlessly white, even teeth. He could be proud of his teeth if of nothing else.

The dentist set his reflector at an angle; a yellow ray coming from the concave glass blinded the "patient." He jerked his head away and shut his light-blinded eyes.

"Which one?"

The informer pointed at random to a left molar in the upper jaw. The dentist tapped it with an instrument. Not

only was there no cavity; there was not even the slightest crack.

"This tooth? Only one?"

It occurred to the informer that the dentist was mocking him.

"No, no," he said, twisting his mouth. "The one next to it, too."

"What hurts it most, cold or hot food?"

"Both. Please doctor prescribe some drops or put some of that—how do you call it—yellow stuff on it."

The dentist made no reply. He turned to the shelf, took something out and heated it over a burner. The informer could not see what it was. The dentist's back blocked his view. Then the dentist moved the reflector aside and again there was a blinding ray of light in the informer's eyes, and he was too stunned to think.

"Open your mouth!"

"Lo. . ."

With his left hand the dentist pressed the informer's head to the head-rest; the sleuth was surprised that so small a man could exert so much strength. Cold steel ran along his gums and came into contact with his tooth. A squeeze, a twist, a muffled scream, and the extracted molar lay on the little table beside the armchair, its two roots jutting forward. Before the informer knew what was happening the forceps came down on the second tooth, and the dentist's hand pressed harder on the informer's temple; he held hard and convulsively to the arms of the chair. The tooth must have had extra long roots—the veins stood out on the dentist's forehead. The informer howled every time he turned and twisted the forceps. At long last the full horror of the situation dawned on him; he released the arms of the chair and grabbed the dentist by the elbow. But the movement that was to deliver him was made just as the dentist succeeded in extracting the tooth.

"Rinse your mouth!" said the dentist, panting a little from the effort. He pulled out a handkerchief and mopped his neck and bald head. "What teeth you've got! No offence meant but they're as strong as a horse's! And you were talking about smearing them with something. No ointment's of any use in your case. Rinse your mouth!"

He went to the basin and pressed on the foot-pedal; water gushed up in a little fountain, his voice gurgled like the water, clearly mocking the informer. The informer whimpered silently, filling his mouth with warm water that smelled of mint. Two teeth, the blood darkening round the roots, teased him from the top of the glass-topped table.

"Rinse your mouth!"

The dentist was dragging out the process in order to give the Committee an opportunity to do everything it required. Personally he had not the slightest idea what the Committee was doing. He did not know even if he had been right in extracting two perfectly healthy teeth. While performing the operation he had had no qualms or doubts; his only thought had been to teach the scoundrel a lesson. He had a notion that that was precisely the meaning of the clear-eyed stranger's wink. It had been good fun. But now he realized that the cruel joke he had played on the informer might rebound and upset his well-ordered, prosperous existence. He was a well-known dentist with a large practice, but he might find himself in Chukhloma, Solvychegodsk, or some other remote place to which people were exiled by a stroke of the pen of some secret service official. The secret service was all-powerful in the Russian empire.

He felt downcast. He was sorry for what he had done. First of all because of his thoughtless action; and secondly because he regretted that he had become involved with these illegal workers. True, he had agreed to let his apartment be used only because Grigory Vasilyevich, an

old patient of his and a respected barrister, had assured him that Social-Democrats recognized only legal methods of struggle; they themselves considered that illegal work was harmful and unsuited to the fundamentals of the party; uprisings or still worse bombs were naturally out of the question. Grigory Vasilyevich had even brought some books to back up his words; of course, the dentist had not read them, but after turning over a few pages he had seen that they were written for truly peaceful, law-abiding people. The people who came to the meetings seemed law-abiding enough and though he did not understand the words they used, he knew enough to understand that they did not speak about anything that might threaten the "foundations of the state or society."

He believed what he was told and permitted them to gather in his apartment once a week and now, in consequence, he had committed an unpardonable mistake. He had done something which not only ran counter to the ethics of his profession but which might have the most staggering consequences.

The dentist looked round at the informer. The latter, too, was playing for time. He saw no need to hurrry. It was warm in the surgery; the soft, fragrant water had soothed the bleeding lacerations which the dentist's pitiless forceps had inflicted on his gums; and he was still somewhat dazed in consequence of the pain he had just endured.

The dentist's regrets grew stronger. He irritably threw aside the towel he had been using to dry his hands. By detaining this agent of the secret police he was helping the Committee and getting more deeply involved with an illegal association; he could not think why he was behaving in this way, since he had decided that he would have nothing more to do with the business. He must finish with it once and for all.

"Well," he said, averting his eyes, "I think that's

enough. You may go. Don't eat or drink anything hot until tomorrow morning. If there is any more pain, I don't suppose there will be, come to see me tomorrow at any time. I will fit you in."

The look the informer gave the dentist was full of hatred as he got up. It sent a shiver down the dentist's spine.

"The fee is ten rubles," he mumbled, summoning all his courage and throwing out his chest. "But I imagine that you're not well off, that you are a low-paid employee. I take no fees in such cases."

He opened the door to the hall. The informer looked to see whether all the coats were still hanging there. They were, even the miserable coat belonging to Cow's Death. That stumped him. He began to wonder whether perhaps, after all, Cow's Death had really come to have his teeth seen to. He looked a bit washed up; his teeth were probably decayed and full of cavities. The informer remembered the two good teeth he had lost and the thought made his heart sink.

All the same he stopped to think the situation over when he found himself on the landing and the door had slammed behind him. Should he report the dentist and, generally speaking, should he say anything at all about the affair. His chiefs might make fun of him about the teeth and say that it was his own fault that he had landed in trouble. He could tell them that he had gone to have a tooth pulled out and discovered Cow's Death and the worker there. He could also hint that there was something suspicious about the dentist.

But what if the local police inspector or some superintendent happened to be one of the dentist's patients. His apartment was richly furnished; it was only the riffraff that wanted a revolution, that was obvious. If he blundered he would have to pay for it.

The informer sighed, spat blood near the door and began to descend the stairs, his mind still not made up.

## *Chapter V*

## AN UNDERSTANDING

The coats were all there; no one had left, nor could they leave. No sooner had the informer followed the dentist to the "execution" and the thick sound-deadening curtains dropped into position after both, than an argument flared up. It continued all the time the dentist was pulling the teeth, every minute growing more heated and angry.

When the dentist had seen the informer out and had made sure that the man's heavy footsteps had faded down the stairs, he put his head in the door of the waiting-room to announce that the police spy had gone and to ask the men to disperse and never to come back again. But what he heard caused him to fall back a step into the hall.

"Betrayal!"

It was Bauman speaking.

He spoke simply, without gesticulating, without any stress on words and quite unlike an orator; the words he used carried their own strength. In his manner of speaking, as in everything else, he showed himself to be a pupil of Lenin. Always, even at the tensest, most dangerous moments, Lenin spoke simply, without raising his voice, a smile on his lips and in his eyes, penetrating, lively and keen, his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat.

"Betrayal of the working class, precisely. That's the only name for the position which the so-called minority is trying to insist on. It's disgraceful! And yet you dare to quote Marx. Marxists! Long ago, in the 1880's Marx said that *Russia* would give the signal for the world revolution. Marx, who had travelled the world over, passionately expected revolution here in *Russia*, a revolution of world significance. And where are you leading the work-

ing class? To what prison, to what cattle-yard are you trying to drive them instead of taking them out into the open, to fight for their freedom? And where are you doing all this? In Moscow, which has the second largest concentration of proletarian forces in Russia..."

"Forces?" Gustylyov interrupted. "None of that demagogy! We've got to face the facts. Where are they, your proletarian forces? What can you do with these thousands upon thousands of religious illiterates? We cannot find the people for the Committee. Just a few individuals!"

"Quite right," Grigory Vasilyevich confirmed. "In most of the districts here we haven't even organizers."

"Nonsense!" Bauman said, shrugging disgustedly. "Rubbish! There are countless multitudes in Russia, only you've got to be more resolute in recruiting the workers, you must work on a bigger scale, a bolder, bigger scale! Bring in the workers and young people!"

"Workers?" Grigory Vasilyevich asked malevolently, and crossed his legs.

"Yes!" Bauman said vehemently. He felt the blood rushing to his face, but controlled himself and began to speak in even tones: "Don't worry. Only help them to get out on to the road. Once there they will go forward so fast that they'll be ahead of you before you know where you are. Your whole trouble, your whole crime is that you have no faith in the working class, that in spite of all your loud 'class' phraseology, deep down in your hearts (and maybe not so deep down) you regard them as a herd of cattle, the cannon fodder of history."

"You have no right to talk like that!" the student said angrily and rose. "We, young people..."

Bauman stopped him with a gesture:

"I'm not talking about you personally or about everyone who is considered a Menshevik; if I were, there would be no point in talking at all. So far I am merely explaining..."

"You mean abusing," Grigory Vasilyevich taunted. "We know all about your Bolshevik methods of arguing!"

"Let us try and reach an agreement," Bauman continued. "I'm sure you yourselves cannot fail to see that the movement is growing and developing before your eyes. The question of the overthrow of tsarism is on the order of the day and you cannot hold it back even if you want to."

"We have no intention of dragging anyone anywhere," Gustylyov broke in. "Unlike you we do not coerce anything or anybody. Neither people nor history. And in this sense we stand for the overthrow. We do not even object to an armed uprising if it takes place spontaneously. But to prepare for it—that, I'm afraid, is not our business."

"There you are. That is the whole crux of the matter! In the first place, the task of the Party is precisely that: to prepare for an armed uprising. Secondly, our task is not only to overthrow the tsarist autocracy, but to lead the revolution further immediately the autocracy has been overthrown. And from this follows the third point. You intend disarming the working class at the very moment when the real time and possibility arises for arming it; you intend ending the revolution just when it is 'beginning to start.' "

"And that, by the way, is exactly what we shan't let you do," Kozuba added, stroking his beard. "Think of it well, gentlemen. Aren't I right, Rook?"

"Rook!" Grigory Vasilyevich exclaimed, his face clouding.

There was an agitated movement among the others, too, at the mention of that name. It was sufficiently well known in Moscow for its short but stormy past.

Kozuba looked round:

"It appears I've said something I shouldn't. Well, I can't help it. While we're sitting on the same Com-

mittee I can't get used to the idea that we are not friends."

"Nor should you," said the student quickly, faltering over his words. "After all the main argument between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks today is on the organization of the Party, you know."

He glanced at Bauman, as though waiting for confirmation. Bauman nodded:

"Yes, it does concern the organization of the Party. But when we are referring to Social-Democracy and not to any other party, organization of the party means organization of the revolution."

The curtains parted again. The dentist entered. He had come to a firm decision.

"I am very sorry," he said, taking up a position behind an armchair and grimly gripping the carved back, "but I am compelled to ask you gentlemen to discontinue today's meeting..." He shrank before the gaze of seven pairs of eyes—some levelled at him in surprise, others expressing amusement—and hurriedly finished what he wanted to say, "...and to forget this address."

He bowed and backed towards the door.

"Just a minute, Wilhelm Ferdinandovich!" Grigory Vasilyevich called out and stepped after the dentist. "There's some misunderstanding I'm sure. I'll explain..."

"What have explanations to do with it?" the student objected in great contempt. "I don't see any need for them. It's plain that our dentist gentleman has cold feet."

"You suggest I'm a coward?" the dentist said, turning purple with indignation. "I've just pulled out two perfectly good teeth!"

No one spoke. The news came as a surprise.

"Suicide!" Bauman exclaimed, checking his laughter. "Stand up in homage, gentlemen. But before going—," he looked meaningly at the dentist; the latter understood the look and left the room. "Let's, in spite of everything,

come to terms on some of the main questions of our work. The Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks are opposed on a fundamental question. That is definite. But it is equally definite that not everyone has analyzed the situation in detail and it cannot be said conclusively that every Menshevik is really a Menshevik..."

"...and that every Bolshevik is really a Bolshevik," Grigory Vasilyevich added venomously.

"Quite right," Bauman nodded. "And what you've said is especially so. Therefore we have to give people every opportunity of discovering where they stand. I hope that when we get down to practical work many of you will understand that by adhering to Plekhanov and Martov you're running the risk of becoming, shall we say, obsolete cranks. I think we ought to call a special meeting for tomorrow and discuss the programme of immediate action. Only the most immediate action—that's easier to decide. We can also discuss new candidates. The Committee and its various bodies have to be reinforced without delay."

"With workers and young people?" Gustylyov taunted.

Bauman was not the only one to nod. Grigory Vasilyevich frowned; the student seemed almost won over.

"The third point on the agenda is about ways and means of putting out literature. I've already been told that you haven't even a printshop. I don't see how you can breathe without it. We've got to organize one."

"There's no place for it," Gustylyov growled irritably. "We have gone over that time and again. We haven't the people, the money, or the premises."

After some hesitation the student spoke as if he were saying some tongue-twister:

"Actually I could offer my room."

"Your room?" Grigory Vasilyevich repeated and looked at the student through narrowed eyes. He saw him somehow in a different light, and for the first time he

noticed that the student was short, sickly-looking, pigeon-chested and that his beard was thin. A consumptive, most likely.

. . . . . .

The meeting broke up and the men left singly. Grigory Vasilyevich and Gustylyov remained behind. They wanted to speak with the dentist and explain to him the great mistake he was making in breaking off relations with them on the eve of the revolution which would not be slow to appreciate—highly appreciate—any sacrifice made for it.

But the sinister word "sacrifice" only added to the fears tearing at the dentist's heart.

He felt that imprisonment was inevitable. At any rate he would no longer be able to sleep peacefully at night. Every second would be spent waiting for the bells, front and back, to ring simultaneously (they always did that), and for police with clanking spurs and broadswords (for the moment he imagined that police wore huge broadswords) to take him away to a fortress, a casemate, a ravelin, a bastion, or to whatever they called those places.

For that reason Vogt flatly refused to listen to anything that Grigory Vasilyevich and Gustylyov had to say on the matter. "Sacrifice!" That was not the word to use to a self-respecting dentist. Whether he stood for the revolution or not, there would always be people who needed a filling. That had been the case since the world was created. Scientists had found fillings in the teeth of people of the Stone Age. If you knew how to fill teeth your living was assured under any regime. All you had to do was to keep out of politics. He was a fool to have dabbled in it. Those two teeth had been a good lesson. He would not make such a mistake a second time.

Oh, no! He would now take his leave of them.

He turned his back on Grigory Vasilyevich and Gustylyov, walked to the glass-topped table and demonstratively

picked up a pair of plaster jaws. Every movement he made stressed his concern for his profession and nothing else. The two Committee men had no alternative but to leave. Grigory Vasilyevich lingered in the waiting-room.

"We are going to have a lot of trouble with this Rook, I can tell you!" Gustylyov sighed.

Grigory Vasilyevich affected a flippant tone:

"I'm not worrying. Naturally we have to prevent him from contaminating the Committee with his henchmen and obtaining the majority. I expect you've noticed that he behaves already as though he was the secretary of the Committee."

"How are you going to stop him? It is difficult to object on principle to accepting workers on to the Committee. If we do that, these people will take their demagogy to the factories! But if the workers are like Kozuba... Our people, you must admit, have no links with the factories—no worth-while links, I mean."

Gustylyov sighed once more and, with gloomy thoughts filling his mind, went slowly down the stairs.

## *Chapter VI*

## WAR

Newsboys were running up and down the streets.

"Japanese at-tack without declaration of war!" they shouted, waving their newspapers. "Treacherous attack by destroyers! *Retvizan, Tsesarevich,* and *Pallada* put out of action!"

War!

That day there had been a thaw. A sleigh dragged heavily over the dirty wet snow, its iron runners grinding against the cobbles. Bauman was on his way from Taganskaya district to Strastnaya Square; from there he had to make his way to the bacteriologist's.

War!

The moment it broke out Bauman felt sure that it would be only a matter of months before revolution would sweep the country. Corruption was strangling tsarist Russia, and it was impossible for tsarism to win the war. A lost war produced a revolutionary situation. But are we, Party men, ready for it? Bauman asked himself.

The answer was no. In the Committee work was bogged down. Although the leadership had been wrested from the Mensheviks—the Bolsheviks had six votes against the Mensheviks' four—the latter's obstructionist tactics were even more spiteful than before. They were providing neither contacts nor money.

The type and a printing press had been procured, but that was as far as the business had gone. Both press and type had lain idle a whole month in the student's room in Plyushchikha Street. He had given one excuse after another for not starting the work. Quite obviously he was scared. Other rooms had been found in Taganskaya district and the rent paid for them with all the money they had. But that, too, had come to nothing. They had overlooked the fact that there was a dance hall below the flat and when they started printing, the press made such a racket that only a complete idiot could fail to ask what machine was making the noise. That put the lid on the printshop.

But now the war made further inaction out of the question. The Committee had to respond to events, using the full force of the underground Bolshevik press.

Accordingly, Bauman had just given instructions for the printshop to be packed up and taken to his own rooms in Krasnoselskaya Street. It was naturally against the rules of conspiracy because a printshop should always be kept isolated. But Bauman was in constant touch with the people at the factories, mills, and the university. He definitely could not even for half an hour be torn away from organizational activity (which was mostly of a

conversational character, and quite often an exchange of only a few words); but although it seemed almost unnoticeable, it was this form of activity that strengthened the Party, and, consequently, the revolution.

It was modest spade-work all along the line. One conversed with single individuals and one talked to people in groups; when one came to count the number of people one spoke to and words one used, one felt how very few they were! But on second thoughts one found that every word gave birth to an idea, to anger and readiness to go into action. Everyone Bauman spoke to passed on his ideas, his anger, and his joy that the battle was coming at last. In this way the circle grew steadily, the secret conversations blended into a formidable rumble, the whispers into a battle-cry.

Could he give it all up? He could not! It was the work he knew so well how to do; his words moved those who listened for the simple reason that he spoke the truth from the bottom of his heart. And he firmly knew, as only a true *Iskra* supporter who had worked with Lenin—with the "Old Man"—could know, that he was speaking the truth.

That gave him strength. And those who heard him could not help but believe. Bauman would be the first to ridicule anyone for thinking that he ever, in any way, compared himself with Lenin. But deep in his heart he carried Lenin's truth, Lenin's idea, Lenin's love and passion, and, therefore, like Lenin, he never had indifferent people around him; they either loved him, or, as in the case of Grigory Vasilyevich and Gustylyov, they hated him.

His enemies were putting spokes in the wheel. They produced nothing; neither money, nor rooms, nor contacts. All the worse for them and so much the greater their shame. The time would come when their names would be inscribed on the black list of humanity.

Meanwhile, he had to take the printing press to his own room; there was nowhere else. He could not let it remain unused. The risk was enormous; that went without saying. But if there was no other alternative? They had no money to rent special rooms for it; what funds there had been were now gone.

He would have to redouble his efforts in order not to attract spies. And a warning would have to be sent abroad so that anyone arriving in Russia from there would keep away from his rooms. In short, he would have to take certain measures...

## *Chapter VII*

## DEBATING THE WAR

A manifesto published on February 7 by "grace of His Majesty" afforded all politically unreliable persons under open police surveillance (that meant in plain language all persons exiled without trial to wretched corners of the empire) an opportunity to expiate their crimes by voluntarily going into active service with the troops in the Far East. The tsar offered the revolutionaries peace "on patriotic grounds." The matter was explained and argued about in the workers' groups, and in some groups these arguments reached such a high pitch (the Mensheviks saw to that) that the question had to be raised of calling a meeting of the Committee.

The meeting was held not in Vogt's apartment (no amount of reasoning had succeeded in moving him), but in the studio of a well-known painter, who had contributed to the funds and had allowed the Committee to use his rooms even in the days before Vogt. The studio was big and bright, and the walls were hung with pictures.

Bauman took the chair. First to give their reports were workers from the factories. By and large these re-

ports were gratifying; more people were joining the organizations, and the number of strikes was increasing. True, a comrade from the Morozov Print Works in Tver had brought unhappy tidings of a defeated strike. The strike at the machine-building plant in the same city had been a failure also. But, on the whole, the revolutionary movement was on the upgrade.

"The Tver workers didn't prepare for it properly, I imagine. A strike is all a matter of endurance. You can't defeat those owners by just shouting."

"You can't accuse them of not having prepared for the strike," the comrade from Tver maintained. "I tell you straight, they would have held out longer, only the Mensheviks put them off with their talk about calling off the strike and letting ourselves be worn down so that we'd get too weak for any future action."

"So that's what they taught you!" Kozuba interposed. "You know you've got to take everything that each day brings, then you'll find you've got enough to last your whole life."

"Well," the Tver comrade continued, "the workers were obviously starving and it wasn't very difficult to persuade them. It's always easier to call a strike off."

Kozuba wrinkled his forehead:

"You mustn't make the smallest concessions to the Mensheviks. You've got to prove their arguments are wrong."

"You can't prove they are wrong!" said the comrade from the Morozov Print Works, with a hopeless gesture. "Mensheviks are dogmatists."

Gustylyov smirked with satisfaction.

"They don't let you set your claws into them. Every time your common sense tells you you're right and you get them against the wall, they retaliate like the skunks they are, and spit out such bookish words that you're left without a come-back. The devil only knows if they're

telling the truth. I can't tell! I've never read the books they quote from! Well, all that puts the damper on you, especially when they show off their knowledge. We, they say, are—what's that scientific word?—dia—dia..."

"Dia-lec-ticians," Gustylyov prompted didactically.

Bauman smiled:

"You just tell him, as Lenin would, that dialectics does not mean shoving your tail where your head can't get through."

Everyone laughed, except Gustylyov. He was the only Menshevik at the meeting. That had become the general rule since the time when the majority on the Committee—even though it was a small majority of two—had passed to the Leninists. The Mensheviks had ceased to be active on the Committee, but they always sent one of their number to the meetings in order to keep abreast of events. There were rumours that they had set up their own secret committee and were doing separate organizational work.

"We have no use for book-worms," Kozuba said with a frown. "We want people who know their business. Isn't that right, Rook?"

"Quite right," Bauman nodded, "in the sense that we do not need people who divorce books and theory from practice. But the book itself—theory and science—is, naturally, needed. There can be no practice without theory. We've got to study. Kozuba, here, is studying. Do you remember, Kozuba, how you scratched your head for ideas before the first strike? You don't have to scratch it now, I hope."

Kozuba's stern grey eyes softened:

"That's your work, Rook. I owe it all to you. Besides, as you say: life is the best teacher."

"That's the whole crux of the matter," Bauman said and nodded. "The whole crux of the matter is that life is the best teacher. And it can teach only in the Leninist

spirit which inspires us, because the truth of life lies in Lenin's teaching alone. Life teaches and will teach—in action."

"You say it teaches in action?" asked Semyon, a metal-worker from the Listov Plant, who had, up till then, been silent. "And what if there's no action? In our place, for instance, they're all grumbling about the war..."

"They've certainly got something to grumble about."

"What a terrific beating we're getting!" exclaimed the comrade from Tver. "It's frightening even to think of it. They've already rolled right up to Port Arthur. And they'll take it before we know where we are. That'll make us hang our heads!"

Kozuba spat:

"No disgrace to us."

"What do you mean?" asked the Tver comrade with a frown, his face hardening. "If we..."

"We? You've got to understand, blockhead, that it's tsarism that's getting the beating in this war."

Irina, who was also a member of the Committee but had been delayed, now joined the meeting. Bauman had backed her candidature and there had been very little wrangling about it. Gustylyov had not had the courage to object to Bauman's arguments, for although she was young, very young in fact, she was a steeled and experienced professional revolutionary, besides being an expert printer.

Irina listened, then asked to be allowed to speak.

"You want action?" she asked. "The Bolshevik student organization is arranging a demonstration against the war on Sunday. If the demonstration is supported by the workers..."

Kozuba and Semyon exchanged glances.

"Why not? That'd be fine!"

"Bring the Moscow workers out in a demonstration against the war?" Bauman repeated, making a mental calculation. "There's a lot of sense in that. Who would like to speak, comrades?"

"I'm abstaining," Gustylyov said quickly and compressed his lips.

Kozuba and Semyon exchanged glances again.

"Sunday's round the corner. Shall we have time?"

"We *must* find time," Bauman said sternly. "Naturally, we cannot act without sufficient preparation; the worst thing of all is to be spoiling for a fight and to make no preparations. But it won't do to procrastinate either; we've got to learn to work in military fashion. First we have to put out a leaflet. We'll have the text ready today; I'll see to it. And we'll have to get it into print as soon as it's ready. It will be printed not later than Friday, is that right, Irina? And we'll have it distributed the same day. You'll call group meetings in the shops, and on Saturday we'll hold general meetings. On Sunday—we'll all come out. Now we'll decide exactly what each one of us has to do."

"I'm abstaining," Gustylyov repeated, rising from his seat.

## *Chapter VIII*

## THE SPLIT

Every inch of the window was heavily curtained. On a large table were cases of type, compositor's sticks, a composed page locked in an iron frame, rollers, and paint. Irina, on her knees on the floor, was arranging bundles of freshly-printed proclamations and counting:

"For the Prokhorov workers. For the railway people."

The bell rang. Irina raised her head and waited. It was

quiet. There was no sound. She frowned and stubborn wrinkles formed across her forehead. She reached up the table, rising from her knees, opened a drawer and took from it a big revolver that looked much too heavy for her.

But the bell rang again, and after a short pause (the kind of pause the Morse key makes at the telegraph office) it sounded a third and a fourth time: ting-ting, ting. Irina threw the revolver back into the drawer.

"Muddlers! They can't even ring properly. I could swear it's Gustylyov."

She went to the hall and unlocked the door. It was Gustylyov. But he was not alone. With him were Grigory Vasilyevich and another man, with a black beard. Irina had never seen him before.

"The Rook isn't in," Irina said coldly. "Why do you give the wrong signals. We agreed on two long rings and two short ones. Next time I shan't open. Another thing: you are to come here only as a last resort. Do I have to tell you that we're working in violation of all rules of conspiracy as it is. And here you come with a crowd of others!"

She spoke as she was returning to the room. The three men went straight through the first room and into the printshop. Gustylyov had been there before and knew his way about the apartment.

They stopped in front of the bundles of proclamations lying on the floor.

"How many are there?" Grigory Vasilyevich asked, touching the nearest bundle with his cane.

"Two thousand," Irina answered, unable to conceal her pride. "Just look at that beautiful press! What a difference from those amateurish days when I only had the jellygraph!"

The Mensheviks glanced at each other disapprovingly and Grigory Vasilyevich stooped down to pick up one of the printed leaflets:

"RUSSIAN SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC LABOUR PARTY

*Workers of All Countries, Unite!*

COMRADES!

"Even before the war broke out we, Social-Democrats, said that neither the workers nor the peasants needed it. The war is needed by the government clique who dream of seizing new lands and want to extinguish the mounting flames of popular anger with the blood of the people. Our people are groaning in political slavery and are now drawn into a war to enslave other peoples. Our people are demanding a reorganization of the political order at home, while the powers that be seek to distract their attention with the thunder of cannon at the other end of the world.

"All class-conscious workers of Russia must protest against this criminal and ruinous war. They must show that the proletariat does not recognize national enmity. . ."

Grigory Vasilyevich read with tight lips.

"Down with this shameful massacre! Let the cry sound from all breasts. Let it resound in all factories and mills as the battle-cry of revolutionary wrath!

"Down with the tsarist government—the perpetrator of this shameful war!

"Down with the bloody hangmen!

"We demand peace and freedom!

"All out to the demonstration on May 25!

*MOSCOW COMMITTEE OF THE R.S.D.L.P."*

While Grigory Vasilyevich was reading, Gustylyov and the man with the black beard crossed to the stove. Gustylyov opened the door of the stove and squatted before it. The man with the black beard gathered up the bundle of leaflets lying nearest to him and stuffed it into the stove.

Irina made a movement to stop him, but Grigory Vasilyevich gripped her firmly by the wrist.

"Now don't get excited. They're only doing what's required of them. We've called off the demonstration."

Gustylyov was hurriedly striking matches. The heads kept breaking off. Irina tried to free herself, but Grigory Vasilyevich held her fast.

"Let me go! Don't you dare do it!"

A match finally struck. Gustylyov held it to the bundle and instantly a broad flame shot out of the opened door of the stove. Grigory Vasilyevich's fingers bit deeper into Irina's wrist; she could not move; the man with the black beard and Gustylyov fed armfuls of leaflets to the fire.

"You scoundrels! Even policemen aren't so violent."

The last bundle was thrown into the stove. Gustylyov looked about the room.

"Is there anything here to stir it with? David Petrovich, will you please let me have that iron rod."

He stirred the swollen heap of ash, making the flame shoot up and burn through the remaining paper.

The job was done.

Grigory Vasilyevich released Irina. She shook her numbed hand and suddenly slapped his face.

"There!"

She wanted to say something. Instead, she sat down on a stool and began to sob.

Grigory Vasilyevich was too astonished to realize what had happened, except that his cheek burned. Gustylyov and the man with the black beard looked at him horror-stricken. Finally, he stammered out the words:

"You—you'll pay for this. You'll hear from me."

Footsteps could be heard in the hall. Gustylyov hastily closed the stove and stood up. The door opened and Bauman came in. He looked at the weeping girl, at the trio of Mensheviks standing together, and a dark flame leaped into his eyes.

"What's going on in here?"

"They've—burned," Irina spoke through her sobs with difficulty, "burned all the proclamations."

"What?"

Bauman took a step forward. Grigory Vasilyevich, his cheek still red, began to speak rapidly:

"At yesterday's meeting the Committee decided against our participation in the demonstration."

"Meeting?" the flame in Bauman's eyes grew. "What meeting?"

"An extraordinary meeting of the Committee," the man with the black beard said, moving close to Grigory Vasilyevich and squaring his shoulders as though he was getting ready for a fight. "The meeting was attended by six of the ten members."

Irina almost shrieked with indignation. She looked at Bauman.

Six out of ten! That was a majority. There had been only four diehard Mensheviks on the Committee; the rest of the members were believed to belong to Bauman's group. Two of the majority must have gone over to Grigory Vasilyevich yesterday. But that could not have happened! There was some dirty work somewhere.

Bauman was silent. Grigory Vasilyevich confirmed what the man with the black beard had said:

"Yes, six. We couldn't find you and..." he pointed to Irina, apparently incapable of making himself pronounce her name.

"That's a lie," Irina cried. "We were printing here a full twenty-four hours. No one came."

"Comrade Semyon is ill," Grigory Vasilyevich continued, paying no attention to her outburst. "Kozuba, as we all know, is away in the textile district..."

"He returned yesterday," Irina interrupted him. "He was here working with us."

"I was not informed of it," Grigory Vasilyevich replied coldly. "I had every reason to consider him absent.

Besides, even if we had notified everyone it would not have changed the results of the voting. We had a quorum. And, as I have just said, an absolute majority voted against participation in the demonstration. You can easily verify that."

Bauman maintained silence. He never hurried to speak when every word had to be as keen as a razor blade.

"It's downright robbery," he said slowly at last. "You've stolen a Committee decision from the real majority."

"Formally..." Grigory Vasilyevich began.

"The revolution recognizes no such word!" Bauman cut him short. "But I don't intend discussing it with you. Kindly take the trouble to remove yourselves from here."

Grigory Vasilyevich opened his mouth wide, like a fish out of water.

"Wh-a-at?"

"Ex-actly!" Bauman returned stonily. "This is the end! We tolerated your dithering while you were only an embarrassment to us. But since you've dropped to the level of disrupting revolutionary action, since, that is, you are going in for direct *treachery*, it is no longer 'one step forward, two steps back,' as Lenin wrote concerning you; it's a headlong rush to the camp of the enemy. That's your destination. And good riddance to you!"

"Is this a split?" the man with the black beard asked hoarsely, leaning backwards. It looked as though he was about to strike Bauman.

"A split?" Bauman questioned. "That's not the name for it. We're simply throwing you out."

Irina laughed happily through her tears:

"At last! Only now will we begin to live!"

Gustylyov looked round at the printshop accessories lying on the rough unpainted table, at the rickety stools,

at the open door leading into the next room, which was almost bare of furniture, and sniggered:

"Luxurious! If even with our support you can't afford anything better than this..."

"Thanks to you!" Irina said in disgust.

"Yes, thanks to us," Grigory Vasilyevich agreed. "But you've miscalculated with your declaration of war. I imagine you are not well informed. You are apparently unaware that the Central Committee has agreed to admit representatives of the minority in sufficient numbers to..."

Gustylyov and the man with the black beard chuckled maliciously.

"And Lenin is completely isolated. The Central Committee has renounced him. We..."

Bauman took a step forward. The veins on his temples swelled and there was ominous light in his eyes.

"Get out! At once! If you say another word, I'll..."

"What? Violence!" Gustylyov screamed. "The Central Committee will hear of this."

"O-u-r Central Committee," Grigory Vasilyevich said, stressing the first word. He was pale, but, as Irina noted with satisfaction, his cheek still glowed from the smack she had given him.

They went out in single file. The door slammed after them. Did the matter end there, or had things only just begun?

Irina raised her eyes to Bauman:

"They're lying, aren't they?"

"I don't know," Bauman said, shaking his head. "Since the recent setbacks the situation in the Central Committee has not been satisfactory, nor have the best men survived. And this pretty incident we've just witnessed is very indicative. They would never have dared to force a split if they had not felt they had some backing. That's the sort of people they are."

Irina was standing motionless, her hands hanging wearily at her sides.

"Is it possible that they will really expel Lenin?"

"Lenin?" Bauman laughed heartily. "Of course not! If you'd ever spent just an hour with him, such nonsense could never enter your head. When the Academy of Sciences threatened to dismiss Mikhail Lomonosov, he replied: 'Impossible. Unless you dismiss the Academy from me.' But Lenin could never have said even that, because when we speak of the Party, we're speaking of Lenin. And when we say Lenin, we mean the Party."

The front door banged again, followed by steps in the hall.

Kozuba entered, looking cheerful.

"I met a trio of piebalds outside. Were they from here? Why are they looking so sour?"

Bauman briefly told him what had happened. Kozuba heaved a sigh.

"You're right, we're better off without them. But what's bad is that they've ruined everything for Sunday. We shan't be able to pull it off without leaflets."

Irina bent over the table and surveyed the composed page in the iron frame.

"Not all of the make-up's been scattered. Do you think there's time to print the leaflets again?"

"Isn't the strain too much? It will be your third night without sleep!"

Instead of replying Irina shook her head and took up a composing-stick.

"Wait. What about paper?"

"Paper? The girl's right. Rook, what are we going to do about the paper?"

Bauman scratched the back of his head and sighed:

"About the paper? We've got to buy some. We've used up the supply we had."

"Have you any money?"

"No."

"That means..."

"That means we've got to get some," Bauman laughed. "You get down to work and I'll get the samovar going. We'll think about where to get money over a cup of tea. If we get it by this evening, we'll be finished by tomorrow morning."

"A bit late, that," Kozuba said, shaking his head. "On the very eve of the demonstration."

"Latish, I admit," Bauman agreed. "But that's better than calling it off altogether. By the by, I think we can pull up the blind. There's no need to keep the passers by guessing as to why certain people have their blinds down during the daytime."

He went to the window and pulled a cord. The Venetian blind rose slowly, with a rustling sound, the slats folding neatly. It was half-way up when Bauman abruptly released the cord (the slats came down with a clatter) and dashed out of the room.

"Is it the police?" Kozuba shouted after him.

But Bauman was already in the passage. Irina gave Kozuba a reproachful look.

"What a thing to ask! Do you think the Rook would have run out if it was the police?"

Irina and Kozuba listened.

"He's opened the door. Someone's arrived. I heard a carriage drive up just as he was pulling up the blind. That's why I thought it might be the police. I don't know anyone else who would drive up to our house in a carriage."

Kozuba strained his ears, his head cocked on one side, and his brows jerked up in surprise:

"Well, I'll be—they're kissing! Would you believe it, they're kissing!"

## *Chapter IX*

## EXPRESS

Kozuba was right. In the hall Bauman was actually kissing a beautiful woman in an elegant summer suit and a large, stylish hat with a feather. She was tall and rather plump, a little too plump for her thin face. It was Nadezhda. Nadya.

"At last! I've worn myself thin waiting. What kept you away so long?"

"Business!" Nadya laughed. "You know perfectly well what's going on abroad. Downright piracy. The Mensheviks have thrown all restraint to the winds."

"So it's true, then? Now I can see why our friends are riding the high horse. All right! Lenin will make it hot for them."

"I'm sure he will. But in the meantime our people are having a hard time of it. Temporarily the Mensheviks are in control of the press and they have the transport facilities and the money. And you should see the baiting that's going on. They're digging into people's personal lives and are cashing in on every bit of past gossip. Don't think they're not having a crack at you, too. They are, my dear. They're searching for something they can use in order to discredit you. All the squabbles and dirty tittle-tattle come from them."

"I wonder if it might be Gustylyov?"

"What name was that?" Nadya contracted her eyebrows, trying to recall something. "Gusty... Yes, it did sound something like that. Oh, yes! I remember now. It was someone called Gustylyov. He sent some letter denouncing you."

"Sit down, dear. Or take off your hat at least."

Both laughed.

"There's time enough for all that. I want you to know everything immediately. . ." She looked towards the door. "You're not alone, are you?"

He followed her gaze.

"No."

"Can anyone hear us? What I'm telling you is for you alone. There's no need to spread it all about."

"Are things that bad?" he asked in alarm.

She laughed again.

"It all depends on what you mean by 'bad.' It's never bad for the Bolsheviks. Sometimes it may be difficult. But with Lenin we've nothing to fear."

A picture of Vladimir Ilyich rose before Bauman's eyes. The very high forehead under thinning hair, and the young, lively, humorous eyes.

"Have you brought any letters?"

"Certainly. From Vladimir Ilyich. Give me a knife. . . But first I'll have to take my dress off. No one will come in, I hope."

"I don't think so," Bauman replied, a little doubtfully. "But never mind. They're friends."

"Pull down the blinds. The passers-by can see in."

Bauman went to the window. Nadya slipped off her blouse and stepped out of her skirt and became transformed into a slim woman. All the plumpness had come off with her clothes.

"I've got two hundred copies of Lenin's *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back.* The rest," she waved her hand in the direction of a suit-case standing by the door in the hall, "is there. It's got a false bottom. Now give me a knife. The letter is in the skirt, here, in the seam."

Bauman clicked open his penknife, dropped to his knees and began ripping open the seam.

"It's just struck me that I didn't start up the samovar," he said, suddenly remembering. "Iri-na!"

"You must be mad! Can't you see I'm undressed."

But it was too late. The door had opened. Irina stopped abruptly on the threshold, overcome with embarrassment. Whatever was this? She could not take in the scene before her. A woman, only half-dressed and Bauman on his knees beside her.

"To begin with let me introduce you," Bauman called out. "Meet my wife."

From the opened seam he drew out two long tightly pressed strips of paper and rose to his feet.

"Coded?"

"Naturally. Wait a minute. Let's start with the suit-case. I'll unpack it. I must put something on, after all."

He hastily pulled the suit-case into the room and moved aside, unfolding the letter.

"Well, he's as good as dead and gone now," his wife said, waving her hand, "that is, until he's decoded the message. You'll have to tell me about things here. You're Comrade Irina, aren't you?"

Irina nodded. They shook hands firmly.

"You could start by seeing to the samovar," Bauman said, without looking up from the letter. "Our visitor from abroad must be given some tea. Only, Nadya dear, I'm afraid we haven't much to offer you in the way of food."

"No money? That's nothing new!" Nadezhda said with a little laugh; then she sighed. "Never mind. I've brought some."

"A lot?" Irina asked with such a shrill note in her voice that Nadya laughed.

"Plenty."

"Let's have it!" Irina held out her palm. "That'll solve the paper problem for us. Do you hear, Rook?"

"You'll have it tomorrow," Nadya said, "and as much as you need."

"Tomorrow will be too late," said Irina, crestfallen. "We need the paper before evening."

"How absurd you are! I haven't any money on me, you know. I'll have to go to the bank for it."

"Oh, what a bother," Irina wrung her hands in dismay. "Why didn't you bring it with you? You could have sewn it in somewhere."

"I could not. You see I came express."

"I don't quite understand," Irina faltered.

"You don't know what express means?" Nadya asked, surprised. "We say a person is coming express when he is carrying literature in the train with him. It is to show the difference between that method and the usual contraband transport by foot across the border; the express method is immeasurably faster."

She unlocked the suit-case, took out a blouse, skirt, and a tie, and began to dress, talking all the while:

"And now tell me how matters stand here in Moscow. I'm going to work with you. Nikolai and I, you know, always work together."

"We've got to have the money to buy paper," Irina repeated stubbornly. "That's the only thing I can talk about now. We simply have to get paper. Otherwise there will be no demonstration on Sunday."

## *Chapter X*

## THE ATTACK

The demonstration failed in spite of everything.

There was the usual, the all too usual delay at the bank. Only on Saturday was the money drawn out; then it was clearly useless to print the leaflets, because they could reach the factories not earlier than Monday.

It was perhaps better that things turned out as they did. Little would have been achieved that Sunday in any case. The weather was inclement with a drizzle of rain in the morning; by noon, when the student column was

scheduled to start from Strastnaya Square—the demonstrators assembled near the Pushkin monument—the rain was coming down in torrents, driving away the few pedestrians there were on the streets. Boulevards, squares, and streets were deserted. In the grounds of Strastnoi Monastery and in the yards of the houses facing the square, the rain drenched mounted police, groups of police on foot, and a squadron of Sumsky dragoons. They had all been brought out, ready for battle. Auxiliary detachments of police, mounted and on foot waited in the court-yards of Leontyevsky and Gnezdnikovsky streets, flanking the route the demonstration would take to the residence of the governor-general. The police had been tipped off about the students' plans and, having received instructions from above "to act ruthlessly," they had made zealous preparations, in order to earn the approval of the tsar.

But on this occasion the opportunity slipped through their fingers. The students did not assemble, correctly calculating that there was nothing to be gained by demonstrating through deserted streets under heavy rain.

Only a handful of the most headstrong enthusiasts, the collars of their wet overcoats turned up against the rain, huddled together near the monument.

They waited until the clock in the monastery belfry firmly struck the half hour and then, becoming finally convinced there would be no demonstration, they moved off down Tverskaya Street singing some student song which contained no hint of anything revolutionary.

That, of course, had been a big mistake, because any, even the slightest, disturbance gave the police an excuse to interfere, the more so on this particular day when they were thirsting to turn in a report of their victory. The policeman on duty in the street immediately blew his whistle; this long-awaited signal was caught up by other policemen, reaching the court-yard of Strastnoi Monas-

tery like lightning. The mounted police, followed by dragoons, urged their horses forward in the wake of the retreating group of students. There was no need to keep back a reserve, as, apart from this group of a dozen or so students, there was no one to attack.

Allowing the students to pass Bolshoi Gnezdnikovsky Street, the colonel riding at the head of the squadron commanded: "Sabres out!" and broke into a gallop, followed by his men.

It was at this point that Gustylyov ran into Tverskaya from Gnezdnikovsky Street.

He had been unable to keep away. He wanted personally to witness the failure of the demonstration. For that reason he was now walking calmly and pompously under his umbrella down Gnezdnikovsky Street. Except for the janitors on duty at the gates, the street was deserted. When, through the downpour of the rain, he heard the chorus of youthful voices, he hurried to the cross-road.

But he was not the only one. Gates clanged open and mounted police galloped out from the court-yards, seated high in their saddles and happy at last to be going into action after the drenching they had got under the cold rain. As usual the police and troops had been concentrated at eight o'clock, well in advance of the hour for the demonstration. The clatter of hoofs over the muddy cobbles caused Gustylyov to turn his head. Horses were galloping madly in his direction, their riders waving naked sabres. In that flash he caught a glimpse of one janitor in a white apron and with a large medal pointing to him. He instantly remembered having passed that man several times, and realized that he could not have failed noticing him. A command was given. But it was drowned in the thunder of hoofs. Whips and sabres

whirled overhead and spurs bit deep into the horses' flanks. Gustylyov turned in panic and began to run, flourishing his umbrella. He dashed into Tverskaya Street, rushing headlong into the path of the approaching police squadron. The broad chest of a heavy stallion struck him in the face, flinging him far forward. As he fell his head struck the pavement. The hoofs of four horses, galloping one after another at equal intervals, trampled over the now dead body.

Gustylyov was the one and only victim. The students had seen the attack from a distance and had no difficulty in hiding in nearby yards; some even waited concealed under staircases and others found refuge in homes, the doors of which were hospitably thrown open to the young men fleeing from the police.

The body was identified on the spot. Gustylyov had been a punctilious man and carried all his documents on his person. He was buried at public expense and no notice of his death was published in the newspapers. Even Grigory Vasilyevich and the man with the black beard learned of his death only a week later, when, worried over his long absence, they decided to send someone to his rooms.

Grigory Vasilyevich wrote an obituary, and when, printed on a rotator in lilac-coloured letters, the leaflet reached Kozuba, he held it in front of him for a long time and read it slowly with great annoyance.

"What are you going to do about this?" he asked Bauman with a deep scowl. "Look at the saint they've made of him! And the people believe it all, you know. We had a special meeting about it in the weavers' building yesterday. They spoke of him as having died at his post for the cause of the working class. Just imagine it, Gustylyov! Phew! Are we going to deny it?"

"Were you at the meeting you're talking about?" Bauman asked instead of replying.

"Well, as a matter of fact, I was," Kozuba muttered, his eyebrows overshadowing his eyes; he already felt there was a poser coming.

"Did you expose the whole business? Did you tell them who Gustylyov really was?"

"I didn't speak, of course."

"Why of course?"

"What could I have said? If I had said anything against it all, it would have looked as though I was trying to mitigate the crime of the police. What's more, if I had told them what Gustylyov really meant to the working class, it would have seemed as though I was pleased he got killed and was suggesting that it just served him right. That wouldn't have done."

"That's the whole point," said Bauman, shrugging his shoulders. "And here you're asking me if we're going to publish a denial. You've reasoned it out correctly for yourself."

"True enough," Kozuba said gloomily. "But it's a nuisance all the same. It's deception, that's what it is. And the Mensheviks are making capital out of it."

"You can't go far by deception. Anyhow our printshop has more important things to do."

Indeed, the printshop had plenty of things to print. The war was dragging on. Unrest was growing at the factories and universities. The usual forerunners of peasant "disorders"—rumours of a division of the land, of dividing up the estates of the landlords were growing and spreading in the countryside. Every one of Lenin's letters pointed out that events of considerable importance were imminent and that Party activity should be developed to the utmost and on the widest scale. The

revolutionary movement of the working class and peasant masses of Russia was clearly advancing and gaining momentum, but the situation was rendered complicated by the fact that one section of the Central Committee wanted to come to terms with the Mensheviks. Everyone endeavouring to lead the movement into an impasse had to be pushed ruthlessly aside and the leadership had to be made secure for the only truly revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat—the Bolsheviks. If that were not done by the time the masses were ready to rise, the tremendous force of the impending explosion might be wasted.

In Moscow the split freshened the atmosphere. But Gustylyov's death raised the hopes of the Moscow Mensheviks. Their proclamation, "To the Memory of a Martyr," was printed in the name of the Moscow Committee of the R.S.D.L.P. To all intents and purposes they meant to continue the struggle. The fight facing the Bolsheviks was not an easy one, if only because there was very little money available.

Expenses were cut wherever possible. The big apartment in Krasnoselskaya Street had to be given up and the printshop accessories packed away. For the time being Kozuba stored them in his little room.

Bauman and his wife rented a cheap little house in the suburbs—in Petrovsky Park; the idea was to have the printshop there if no money was forthcoming to buy first-class equipment and get premises for it that would meet conspiratorial requirements. Allowances to Party workers—district propagandists and organizers—were reduced to ten rubles a month without any travelling expenses. Frequently, if not every day, Irina had to go from one end of the city to another on foot, because she had not the money to hire a carriage, even though she added to her allowance by giving lessons.

Difficult times were now before the Bolsheviks.

It became increasingly difficult to get rooms for meetings. This was certainly the case in Arbat Street, where the bureau met, for the eyes of the bacteriologist reflected a growing fear and sense of guilt. He would greet and part with his "visitors" in a state of embarrassment, his shoulders drooping. He had never behaved in this way before.

They should have found a new place to meet, as it was quite obvious that the bacteriologist was growing uneasy. But although they talked it over they did nothing to find some way out of the situation until one day Lengnik, walking unexpectedly out of the reception room, found himself confronted at the door by the bacteriologist's wife, Marya Pavlovna. His sudden appearance had disconcerted her for a moment, and she had quickly disappeared. There had been both fright and anger in her eyes.

That day they dispersed with the firm resolve never to return to the bacteriologist's roof. However, the decision was taken too late. The following day, as he drew near to his house in the evening, walking down a deserted little street, Bauman felt quite sure that he was being followed.

## *Chapter XI*

## NYURA'S DEBUT

Irina rushed into Kozuba's room as he was sitting down to a cup of tea. He had just returned from the mill. Nyura bustled about for another cup and saucer:

"Have something with us, won't you?" she said.

But Irina brushed away the idea.

"No time for that! The Rook's in trouble."

Kozuba jumped to his feet.

"You mean he's been arrested?"

"He may have been by now," said Irina. She turned her face to the window beyond which daylight was

already fading, and a forlorn look came into her eyes. She shuddered. "On second thoughts I expect they'll wait until it's dark. They always make their arrests at night. But I'm positive he'll be arrested. The house is completely surrounded by spies and police. I tried to reach it by the kitchen garden, but the police had concealed themselves even there. It's a mystery why they let me through. I felt as though I was running the gauntlet."

"I don't see what the Rook's waiting for then!"

"That is exactly why I've come. He'll never manage to leave in his own clothes. Nadya sent me to you to ask for some of your things—a workman's blouse, waistcoat—whatever you've got. I'll take it to him. If he changes to workman's clothes there is a chance they might not recognize him."

"My things?" Kozuba and Nyura exchanged confused glances. "I don't know... All I own is on me—everything."

"Yes, and what's the good of what he has got?" Nyura said disapprovingly. "The Rook couldn't possibly wear such things. Do you call these trousers? It's a scandal that's what it is—nothing but patches! Perhaps we might..."

"There's no time," Irina interrupted her. "It's now or never. It'll be no use crying afterwards. Remember that fifteen hundred new proclamations to the soldiers were taken to his house only yesterday. From St. Petersburg."

That brought an exclamation from Kozuba.

"You mean he won't burn them?"

"No, not for anything. That's the whole trouble," Irina said, shaking her head. "He says he may sit it out. Or they might not find them during the search. But to destroy fifteen hundred..."

"He's liable to get a special charge against him if they find those proclamations."

"It makes no difference," Irina said, with a proud flourish of her arm. "It's all the same to the Rook. There isn't much they can add to what they already have against him! But we must try to help him get away. It's clothes we want! If you haven't any, perhaps you might get some from the neighbours."

"You bet I can, I don't think!" Kozuba snorted. "Try and find a worker with two pairs of trousers!"

He thought for a moment, then snatched his battered cap off the table.

"Let's make a move."

"What about the clothes?"

Kozuba ran his hand down his blouse.

"On me. I'll change into the Rook there."

"Into the Rook?" Nyura drawled. "You're out of your mind, old man."

"I'm fleet on my feet. They won't catch me," Kozuba sang out with a show of bravado and strode to the door. "And if they do, what can they prove against me?"

His hand was almost on the door knob, but he hesitated.

"Here, wait a minute! With us not being too sure of anything what are we going to do about the printshop?"

All three looked at a shabby sofa standing against the wall. Kozuba raised the seat a little; the weak, rusty springs gave a long and plaintive squeak.

Under the seat were an iron frame, small linen bags of type, home-made cardboard cases, compositor's sticks, and rollers.

"Yes—I thought of getting it all together and going tomorrow."

"Chuck it! There's nothing we can do now. Of course it's all very, very important, but for all that it's something that can be acquired. If they take it away, we'll get more to replace it. But we'll never be able to get another Rook."

Kozuba shut his eyes tightly, then opened them.

"And will you be able to get me another Nyura?"

Irina understood.

"I think Nyura should leave—just in case. If they find the things—let's make sure there aren't any of us around. The misfortune will not be so very great then. Only let's go quickly. Do you hear, Nyura? You go away, too."

"I shall not! Where do you think I can go in the night? Nothing can happen to me here and I think I'll be of more help if I stay."

"That's right!" Kozuba said approvingly, stroking his wife's head tenderly. "Let her look after the printing materials. We'll make her responsible for them. D'you hear, old woman?"

"Yes," Nyura said serenely, her hands tightly clasped and her lips set in a firm line.

"Now listen—d'you know how a mandarin executes common people?"

Nyura giggled into the palms of her hands.

"Listen to him! How should I know?"

"If you don't take good care of the type and things," he said, admonishing her, "you'll soon find out. I'll deal with you—like a mandarin would."

"Kozuba!" Irina called out impatiently. "Every minute is precious, and here you are wasting time!"

"Everything's got to be done sensibly, my dear," said Kozuba gently, taking some papers out of his pocket. "More haste, less speed. See I almost took these along in my hurry. Nyura, hide these for me so that no stranger will be able to find them."

He pressed the papers into her hand and gave her a quick, clumsy kiss on the forehead. Then he spoke to her in a tone of voice that had lost its playfulness.

"Wait till it's dark," he said sternly. "If I haven't returned by then, see you take everything to Timofeich.

You know him? You'll have to leave the frame for the time being—it's too heavy for you. But you can tie the rest under your—well, you know what—and take it out that way."

He stroked his wife's head once again and followed Irina out.

After locking the door, Nyura stood for a while under the lintel, shaking her head in thought. She smoothed the papers in her hand. At first she thought of putting them in the hot-air hole in the stove. She opened it and rummaged with her hand—when she drew her hand out her fingers were covered with soot. She ran her eyes round the room and fixed her gaze on the bed. She took a pillow, made a small hole in the seam, stuffed the papers into the down, then felt for any hard bumps with her hand and smiled with satisfaction. That had been a happy thought. She put the pillow back on the bed, cleared the table and took away the samovar. When everything had been tidied up, she contemplated for a moment over her next step, then found a sheet of paper, drew a bottle of ink towards her and began to write, tracing the letters slowly and painstakingly.

Dusk was gathering. It became dark. Nyura lit the lamp and returned to her writing. The letters followed one another slowly.

There was a knock at the door. Nyura turned her head and a steely look came into her eyes—no one had ever seen that look. It was a strange knock. Malevolent. She waited, scarcely daring to breathe. A second passed and the fist beat a loud tattoo on the door.

"Who is it?" Nyura called, her ringing voice clear above the resonant knocking. "What are you getting excited about?"

"Open up, woman!" a deep bass voice ordered. "Are you deaf, or what?"

"It's your woman who's deaf," Nyura snapped, "but I can hear. The deuce take you drunken eyes! I'll call the janitor and he'll take you tramps to the police."

"We're all here, janitor and police," the voice replied and there was the sound of a coarse, ingratiating chuckle. "Open up in the name of His Majesty, the Emperor."

"The Lord save us!" Nyura cried in mock alarm and threw back the latch.

The district sub-inspector, a sergeant, two police constables and—there was no mistake about it—the janitor, strode into the room one after another. The inspector carried a brief case.

"Does Nikanor Porfiryev live here?"

Nyura cast down her eyes under the inspector's imperious and insolent gaze.

"Yes."

The inspector, who was fat and bald, took off his cap and wiped his forehead.

"You couldn't have picked a worse place to live in," he panted. "It's scandalous! First floor from the sky. I worked up seven sweats climbing your infernal stairs. You need a balloon to get here. Who are you? Porfiryev's wife?"

Nyura suddenly felt her heart beat wildly. She forgot under what name she had been registered. As Porfiryeva or as someone else. She had lost count of the number of times they had changed their passports.

To be on the safe side she did not reply; fortunately the inspector had not expected any answer. He walked across the room and kicked out at the bed with his polished boot.

"Where is he?"

"I haven't the faintest..." said Nyura indifferently. "I've got a drunkard for a husband."

"A drunkard?" the inspector turned in bewilderment to the janitor, who was lolling despondently against the wall.

The janitor looked at Nyura, then at the floor, scratched his head and drawled in a husky voice:

"He sort of drinks a little. That's true enough."

"You're a muddle-head!" the inspector said distrustfully. "Politicals have no use for vodka. I have yet to meet the political trouble-maker who is a drunk; if a man drinks he's no Socialist!"

"But he is! For sure, he is!" Nyura interposed. "As soon as it's evening he's always with a bottle, the son of Satan. He's nothing but a Socialist, you are quite right!"

"Shut your mouth, you stupid woman!" the inspector silenced her, "if you don't know the meaning of scholarly words."

He drew another heavy breath.

"You might take a seat, Mr. Inspector," Nyura said kindly, pointing to the sofa with a bow. "See how you're sweating—like a horse on slippery ice."

"Now then!" the inspector said sternly, but the next instant he put his hand over his eyes. "Phew, I am tired. This is the second night that cases like yours have kept me awake." He opened his brief case, revealing a thick sheaf of warrants. "A week's not enough for the job! It might be a good idea to sit down."

He lowered himself heavily on to the sofa. The springs creaked under his weight. Nyura unhurriedly took the pillow from the bed—the policemen were already feeling the mattress—shook it up, her strong arms, bare to the elbow, working away energetically, and threw it on the sofa.

"Lie down, Mr. Inspector, while they're doing what they're supposed to."

"This, one might say, is doing us a good turn, mistress!" the inspector laughed. "No harm in lying down, is there?" He heaved his feet on to the sofa and rocked

himself on the springs. "Soft, I'd never have expected it." He unbuttoned his jacket and breathed easily. "This is just what I need!"

The sergeant approached him stiffly. The inspector scowled.

"What do you want?"

"We've finished the search, your honour."

The inspector screwed up his eyes. He did not want to get up.

"Do some more of it!"

The policeman shrugged his shoulders.

"There's nowhere else, your honour. We've searched everywhere. Actually there's no need to search. You can see everything there is. There's only one word for them—beggars."

The inspector's stomach heaved up like a mountain and he closed his eyes tighter.

"But I say continue the search!"

The sergeant wheeled round smartly on his left foot. The police constables and the janitor stood in a motionless group by the door. The sergeant stood for some time without moving, then made another left-about-turn.

"Ready, your honour."

The inspector scratched his side, without opening his eyes.

"Continue the search!"

"There's absolutely nowhere else, your honour."

The eyes opened. They were burning with anger.

"Have you looked in the stove?"

The stove was behind the inspector. One of the constables, who was standing next to the sofa, hurriedly opened the hot-air hole, doing his best not to make a noise, and put his arm into it. A smile played round Nyura's lips. The constable pulled his hand out. He was up to the elbow in soot. He swore under his breath and marched up to the inspector's couch.

"There's nothing there."

"Must be!" the inspector said weightily. "We've been advised."

The sergeant threw up his hands in despair.

"There can't be. We've looked everywhere, up to the cobwebs. The floor—even that has been tapped. The only thing we've found is this piece of writing."

"Writing?" the inspector started up. "There! I told you. Give it here!"

The sergeant tendered him a piece of paper.

"This—I wrote it," Nyura said, shyly covering her face with her hand.

"You?" The inspector looked at her, raising himself on his elbow, and snorted. "So we've got to take you along? Here, let me read it."

He held the paper up close to his eyes. The lamp was far away and it would have been difficult to read if the letters had not been so big and so wide apart.

"'For the repose...'" he read, pronouncing each syllable separately.

"It's for a mass for my relatives. The priest will say their names and lighten their sins in the next world," Nyura explained.

"I'm a Christian, I know!" the inspector growled and continued to read. "'For the repose of slaves...' Why doesn't it say 'God's'? Whose slaves, I'd like to know? It's got to say 'God's'."

"Naturally, God's. That is why I didn't write it," Nyura said quickly. "Why write it when everybody knows?"

"'... slaves: Nikolai, Alexandra, Maria, Tatyana, Olga, Maria, Anastasiya, Alexei...'" the longer he read, the more his eyes rolled, "'... and all their kin.'"

All the remaining springs of the sofa let out a groan. The inspector sat up:

"What is this? Tell me. You want to bury the whole family of the Tsar!"

The policemen crowded round, their curiosity fired. Even the janitor wrenched himself away from the wall. Nyura clasped her hands:

"Oh, no, the Lord be with you! That would be a sin!"

"Relatives, indeed! You needn't guess what all this is about. Clear as daylight. Nikolai—the tsar, Alexandra—the tsaritsa, Maria—the tsaritsa mother, Tatyana and others—daughters, Alexei—the heir to the throne... You're no Christian! He's still a baby, hardly had time to see the light of day, and here you're already praying for the repose of his soul!"

Nyura also raised her voice:

"What evil are you crying down on me? For the repose... How could I think of such a thing if they're alive!"

"They're alive, that's clear enough!" the inspector said sharply. "If they had been dead there would have been no need to pray for their repose. So you want to live without tsars! That, I tell you, will get you a straight ticket to hard labour. That's the same as regicide."

He raised a finger. Nyura began to wail. The tears streamed down her cheeks. She cried shrilly.

"You're a wicked man to accuse me so falsely! If I, with my poor schooling, happened to make a mistake in my writing..."

"Oh, all right, stop bawling. I—well—I was joking," the inspector gave her the paper. "Cross out the heading and over it write 'For the health...'"

Nyura stopped crying. She raised her eyes to the inspector. Tears still stood in them. Her rosy mouth opened in fright:

"The Lord be with you! How can I say anything about their health when they are dead?"

The inspector slapped his knee:

"What a woman! She's impossible!" He picked up his brief case from the sofa and assumed an official mien.

"Actually, we ought to put you down in the protocol. But as nothing was found during the search, we'll let you off for the time being. We'll make further inquiries."

He went out, followed by the policemen.

Nyura dropped home the latch and wiped her eyes.

"Bungling fools!" she said aloud to the retreating footsteps still audible on the steep staircase from the fifth, fourth, and third floors. "It's mice they should be after, not men."

She squeamishly pulled the pillow-case off the pillow with two fingers and, throwing it into a corner sighed:

"I think we'll have to change our passports again!"

## *Chapter XII*

## INVENTORY

A police captain, his legs in tight breeches carelessly stretched out, was sitting at Bauman's table and hurriedly writing in a bold hand. Everything in the room had been turned upside down. The search had been ruthlessly thorough. Even the floor-boards had been pulled up, revealing black depths to the earthern floor below. Nadya was sitting on a sofa from which the upholstery was hanging in shreds. That was the work of the police. Bauman thrust his hands into his empty pockets. Nadya's gaze was indifferent and tired as she watched the police clumsily pulling up the last floor-board in the farther corner. Beside the table and on it were bundles of pamphlets and leaflets. The search was almost at an end. The captain wrote:

"... A search of the apartment belonging to the aforementioned Nadezhda Konstantinovna Kuzmina revealed a considerable quantity of Social-Democratic literature and manuscripts—drafts of proclamations, and articles

evidently intended for insertion in revolutionary publications or for printing as separate leaflets..."

The captain looked round at the policemen who were counting the papers.

"How many?"

A sergeant looked up from a pamphlet he was turning over and said in a particularly meaning tone:

"Many of these publications have the stamp of the Central Committee of the R.S.D.L.P., your honour."

"Good!" the captain exulted, and finished writing the page. "Consequently, we shan't have much trouble. This time, Mr. Bauman, your fate is sealed."

The glazed door leading to the veranda opened with a rattle of panes. Another policeman entered.

"The carriage is here."

The captain nodded:

"Is the hood up?"

"Yes," the policeman replied, clearly astonished; how else should political prisoners be transported?

The officer rose to his feet, and touched the peak of his cap:

"Mrs. Kuzmina, will you be so kind..." and he made a sign to one of his juniors standing near the table. "Zakharov, you'll escort her."

"To the Taganka?"

The captain moved his eyebrows, displeased. They were not supposed to let prisoners know to which prison they were going. "What's the matter with Zakharov? An experienced secret service man and yet..."

Bauman and Nadya got up. Ought they to say goodbye to each other? To embrace each other in front of the policemen.

Obviously not! She was only the tenant of the apartment, while he was a stranger, renting a room.

The policemen watched; eight pairs of hostile eyes followed every movement.

In cases like this people usually thought they might never see each other again.

But it was not of that that Bauman and Nadya were thinking of.

They shook hands without saying a word. Though they were silent, everything was said in the firm handshake.

The panes in the glazed door rattled again and the spurs of the policemen jingled. The captain gave the room a final look and twisted the ends of his moustache. Two policemen were already standing beside Bauman, their tightly-braided shoulder straps swaying on their heaving breasts. They breathed heavily as though getting ready to charge.

"Handcuffs!" the officer said abruptly in a thick voice.

The steel handcuffs were locked round his wrists. Bauman shook the short chain.

"Mr. Officer..."

"I'm sorry," the captain interrupted him, inclining his head with polished grace. "It is against the law, I know. But state necessity has its own laws, Mr. Bauman. They'll be taken off, of course, when we get to the prison. But on the way... How many escapes have you to your credit, my dear sir?"

He made a sign. The policemen made for the door. Bauman walked slowly between them, deliberately dragging his feet. At the door he stopped to hear what the captain was saying.

The captain was giving his final orders, pulling on snow-white, elegant suède gloves:

"Bring in all the men from the street. Do not turn off the lights either in this room or upstairs in the attic. Leave sentries in the summer house and the backyard. Two men at each post, and they are to keep out of sight. I'll see that you get your rations in the morn-

ing. The posts will have to be kept on duty for more than one day. And when the maid comes—there is a maid registered here—arrest her immediately and take her to headquarters. A pretty piece of trouble, too, I'll warrant."

## *Chapter XIII*

## THE NUT-CRACKER AGAIN

At the corner of the street where Bauman's house stood, Kozuba angrily called to Irina:

"Come back! The street's deserted. Have they taken off the watch, I wonder? Is it possible that we're late? It looks as though things are serious!"

Indeed there was not a soul in the street. It was quite deserted.

Irina answered in a quick whisper (they were walking one behind the other, like strangers):

"Yes. When I left there were so many of them you could hardly breathe. Wait here near this kiosk. Buy yourself some lemonade. I'll look over the ground first."

"No sense in that! The clothes on me are... Go and drink the lemonade yourself. I'll be quick."

"Listen to what you're told!" Irina said getting really annoyed and even raising her voice. "If the Rook's gone, who's going to lead the organization? People like me can be found any day. There'll be a hundred to take my place."

She lightly evaded his outstretched hands and passed the booth, vanishing into the darkness of the trees in the side turning.

But no sooner had she taken a few steps than she sat down on a bench by a house next a man in an embroidered Ukrainian shirt, reclining in a melancholy fashion, a guitar in his hairy hands. He looked round at

her and his fingers ran down the strings of the guitar, making a soft insinuating sound. Four carriages followed one another past them, the horses going at a light trot. The leather hoods were raised. This secretive procession could mean only one thing. It was the way the secret police transported their prisoners.

The man raised his hands to his moustache and said something. But she did not hear him. The carriages rolled past, casting unsteady shadows. Irina rose.

"I'm sorry I disturbed you. I felt faint and had to sit down. I think I'm well enough to go on now."

The man also rose:

"But why go? Allow me to accompany you."

She was now in full command of herself.

"No, thank you. My—er—husband is waiting for me here."

"Your husband?"

He returned to the seat, turned his back on Irina and reassumed his melancholy pose. She went farther, in the direction towards Bauman's house, walking on the opposite side of the road. Her temples throbbed with the words: "They've taken him. They've taken him. I'm sure, they've taken him. Those four carriages. I'm sure."

Lights shone in the windows in the attic and, below, in Bauman's room. And against the background of a yellow, dimly shining square glass Irina clearly saw a Nut-cracker—made from wood, very frightening, with a sword.

She tightly shut her eyes as she passed the cottage.

The Nut-cracker in the window was the danger signal. The signal not to enter the cottage.

Dear, dear people! They had managed to put it on the window after all. Let the police wait now. They could sit there a week, for all she cared. No one was going to fall into that trap. Those who knew the address also knew about the Nut-cracker. The Rook loved that fierce-

looking little wooden man. He had told his friends how the Nut-cracker had guarded him after he had escaped from the Lukyanovka, and had not betrayed him although he had remained in the town, for two weeks, under the nose of the secret police.

She went some distance past the house and then turned back. The man on the bench was playing something slowly and sweetly. Kozuba was drinking *kvass** by the booth, sipping it through his moustache. He paid for the drink as soon as he saw Irina emerging out of the gloom, let her pass and then, catching up with her, said in a calm, firm voice:

"They've taken them—did you see?"

"Yes," Irina whispered. "And the Nut-cracker was in the window. That means there's no mistake about it. What are we going to do now, without the Rook, Kozuba?"

"It will be difficult no doubt," Kozuba replied thoughtfully. "However, we'll get along."

## *Chapter XIV*

## ANOTHER HOUSE-WARMING

This time Bauman crossed the prison threshold with a heavier heart than ever before. Nothing could have been more distressing than to be torn away from the work at that moment. Probably he felt it all the more keenly because, from the boastful statements his escort had made to the warder on duty, while the formalities were being gone through in the office, he had learned that that very same night more than fifteen people had been arrested—the entire "Leninist Bureau," as the police

* *Kvass*—a drink made from rye bread and malt.—*Tr.*

officer had put it. If that were the case (and he had no reason to doubt it) then all their work would stop and a wide field would open for the dirty activities of the Mensheviks. They had only one more step to take and they would be on a perfectly legal footing. The government would no longer interfere with them. Already now it was beginning to realize that the Mensheviks were most likely to be of use to it and that it would not be at all difficult to bring them to heel once and for all. The Mensheviks would disrupt the revolution and, as had so often happened in the past, would strengthen bourgeois slavery at the price of proletarian blood. Meanwhile one had to rot behind prison bars.

And the prison this time was really a prison. This was nothing like what existed in Kiev, Voronezh, and Ufa or the places he had been kept at every stage of his way to exile. It was at once obvious that this was a prison where, as the inmates said, "the screws were turned tight on you." There was no escaping from here. It was possible that the thought that there was no hope of escape had made him so downcast.

No, that was not it. It was because he was downcast that the thought had come to his mind. Actually there was no reason on earth why he should not be able to escape.

The iron floor resounded heavily underfoot as Bauman was led higher and higher up the building, through corridors and passages, and past warders. They were going to the "special cell." He had heard the word while his name was being entered in the thick register. He recalled the smirk on the face of the warder on duty, who, in referring to the kind of treatment he was to get in prison, had whispered to the police captain, who had "handed him over":

"He'll fix him, rest assured!"

The warder, his unshaved, bloated cheeks wobbling above the grimy collar of his jacket, had continued to whisper into the captain's ear, while the captain's smile grew broader and broader.

"That's doing things in style," the captain had finally commented.

"He'll fix him!" Cruel, savage words, these. He could obviously expect particularly bestial treatment. Would he get a strictly guarded cell? Hardly, for that was quite usual, anyhow. They would not have been secretive about that. Nor would they have tittered over it. It would be something much worse.

When they had searched him on entering the prison they had insisted on removing his braces. That had been a surprise. Nowhere did they confiscate either handkerchiefs or braces. But here they confiscated both.

"Why?"

The warder's face twisted into a malicious smile.

"What if you should suddenly decide to hang yourself?"

They came to another corridor; the first warder gave Bauman over to another warder standing by it. They had a short whispered conversation and Bauman noticed the new warder's eyebrows rising in surprise.

"The forty-third?"

The escort nodded and began to whisper again. And again the same ugly, malicious smile he had already seen below in the office stole over both their faces.

"Yes, it must be something nasty," Bauman thought.

The warder jingled a bunch of keys, chose one and went to the farthest door. In the dim yellow light of a small lamp winking high up in the ceiling, Bauman could distinguish a tiny cell with grey painted walls and asphalt floor, a table and a stool, and from the pallet two dark eyes, shining from a face half-covered by a blanket.

## *Chapter XV*

## DOUBLE SOLITARY CONFINEMENT CELL

Bauman drew back a step, but the warder blocked his way:

"We'll put in a second pallet tomorrow. For the time being you'll have to make the best of it."

Bauman ran his hand round the cell; it was so small that he could touch both walls from any place in it.

"A second pallet? There's no turning room as it is."

The warder replied without raising his eyes. His fingers toyed with the bunch of keys.

"You'll manage. We'll take them out in the daytime."

He stepped away from the door. It slammed and the lock clanged to. The man on the pallet threw off the blanket, sat up, and swung his feet to the floor. His trousers were dirty and in tatters.

He held out a huge, hairy, claw-like hand and introduced himself, curtly, proudly:

"My name is Blanqui."

Bauman frowned at the mention of the French revolutionary. He heartily disapproved of the habit other underground political workers, the Socialist-Revolutionaries in particular, had of choosing important names for their party pseudonyms.

The name chosen always reflected the character of the man. A real revolutionary was an ordinary person and he always chose an ordinary, simple nickname for himself, as Lenin did. Could anything be more ordinary than that name. And yet it had already resounded throughout the revolutionary world.

Bauman took an immediate dislike to the man—the dirt on him, the foul smell of him, his matted hair. The nickname helped to deepen his dislike. But Bauman was not the man to offend a fellow prisoner. He concealed his aversion behind an ironical smile.

"I see I'm in luck. I've met Marat, Napoleon, Jaurès, Brutus, Lassalle, Odysseus, Ajax, and Alyosha Popovich."

"Blanqui's" jaw dropped in astonishment. His mouth was large and hideous like everything else about this shaggy-looking old man; the sores round his mouth had left permanent scars and there was not a single tooth in his anaemic-looking gums.

"What is your name?"

"According to my passport, Sidorov," Bauman said, smiling. "What brought you here, comrade?"

The old man scrutinized Bauman sceptically:

"I've already told you in plain language that I am Blanqui."

"Who are you?" Bauman asked very seriously. "I don't know you."

"You don't know me?" the old man cried indignantly. "Marx and Engels knew me, and you don't! Let me just tell you. I was born in 1805..."

The man was a lunatic. That was quite obvious.

"...I was wounded three times in street fighting in Paris in 1827. I still have the scars."

He pulled off his shirt and Bauman shuddered. The man's entire body was covered with stripes, but besides the weals made by flogging there actually were three deep, white scars that looked as though they had been made by a sword.

"...I fought on the July barricades in 1830, I led an uprising in 1839, and so on, one plot after another, right up to the immortal barricades of 1848—to the Commune."

The old man raised his shaggy head and looked fixedly into Bauman's face; the latter was sitting on the stool next to the bunk. A dark, crazy light flashed in the old man's eyes.

"Why are you looking at me like that? You don't believe me?"

He raised himself a little and with a furious lurch threw himself on to Bauman, clutching him with his long, sinewy arms.

"So you're a murderer? They sent you secretly! Oh! no, you won't!"

Bauman tried to shake off the arms with a violent effort, but he could not free himself from the heavy, stinking body, because he could not get up from the stool and in a sitting position he lacked sufficient strength. He rolled to the floor, painfully striking his shoulder and the back of his head. The old man, gleefully mumbling some gibberish to himself, strained to get hold of Bauman's face and to seize him by the arms. The peep-hole clicked open; it was no doubt the warder.

Bauman expected him to enter.

They continued to struggle, hardly making a sound. Their laboured breathing was all that could be heard. The peep-hole clicked again. The warder had passed on.

Suddenly the old man's muscles relaxed. Bauman had no difficulty in wriggling out from under his body, which had now become weak, helpless, and flabby.

Bauman got up to his knees, breathing heavily.

The lunatic fell backwards, his mouth wide open.

"Here's my neck. Where's your knife? Finish me off. You've won! You've won, blast you!"

His eyes rolled from side to side. Bauman gently touched him on the shoulder:

"Listen, Grandpa. We've had our fun, so let's pack it up now. Hop into your pallet. I'll lie down on the floor. Only no more fooling. It's time to sleep."

The man's eyelids slowly opened:

"Grandpa?"

"Well, how else?" Bauman nodded, and stretched out his hand. "Come on, now, get up."

"Grandpa?" the old man repeated. "You're lying! If you're not lying, give me a kiss."

"Oh, no!" Bauman laughed. "Not on your life! You first shave and wash and then we'll see about it."

He pulled the old man up. He rose obediently and lay down with his face towards Bauman, holding him fast by the hand.

## *Chapter XVI*

## NIGHT

The hours dragged out in unbearable drowsiness. The old man had calmed down completely and was already sleeping, curled up in the bunk, but Bauman still sat beside him. Even while he slept the old man would not release Bauman's hand.

Who was he? Looking closer Bauman saw that the wrinkles on his face were not a sign of senility and that his toothless, mutilated mouth was young. He thought there was something familiar in the curve of the mouth. Bauman bent nearer, searching his mind. No, he had definitely never seen the man before.

"Blanqui" turned on his back and began to snore; his legs jerked convulsively under the blanket. The peep-hole in the door was cautiously opened. Bauman felt embarrassed at the idea of the warder seeing him sitting beside the pallet with his hand in that of the old man's. He pulled his hand free and stood up. The peep-hole closed. He sat down on the stool again. A dull, gnawing pain was tearing at his heart. It was the same feeling he had experienced on entering the prison.

When he finally fell asleep, it was almost sunrise, but he did not sleep long. Waking-up time was at seven. That was required by the regulations. But the swish of mops in the corridor woke Bauman up long before that hour. His body ached and his neck felt stiff.

He rubbed it with his hands and silently went through his usual morning exercises. Then he unwrapped his small bundle and laid out on the table the articles he had been allowed to bring in with him: soap, tea, a towel... Yesterday's mood returned, making his heart heavy again.

Suddenly through the paneless, barred window he heard a loud, rolling cry:

"Down with the au-to-cra-cy!"

Bauman started, listening attentively. The distant cry was taken up by another voice, nearer this time:

"Down with the autocracy!"

It was picked up by a third and fourth voice... Nearer and nearer it came.

"Do-wn!..."

The old man awoke. He nodded and got up, letting the blanket fall to the floor; he climbed up with one foot on the table and the other on the back of the pallet and shouted through the window in a husky and happy bass:

"Down with the autocracy!"

"It's the prison saying good morning," he explained, climbing down and scratching his back. "That's the custom here. After that comes the roll-call. Our own. The official one is later. But ours will come now. They'll shout in a minute. Listen."

To be sure, a distant voice, the same that had started the muster-roll, shouted out in a commanding tone:

"Newcomers! To the window!"

Bauman got up and gripped the bars of the window. Before him lay the prison yard, in the distance—another building, and ahead, more barred windows. There were prisoners at some of them. Women. Nadya. He thought he recognized her. She waved a hand. Of course it was she, and she had seen him!

He thrust out his hand and waved back.

An angry cry from the door made him turn. The door stood open. The warder still sleepy, unkempt and pale, shook beard and keys indignantly.

"Do you want to go to the punishment cell? You're an educated man and yet you can't obey regulations."

"Shut up, oaf!" yelled "Blanqui." "How many times have I told you not to dare to come in without my ringing for you!"

He got up. He looked fierce at that moment. The warder turned away from him, hurriedly closing the door behind him.

"Don't assume such airs, Mr. Shuisky, if you want to keep out of trouble," he hissed from the corridor.

Shuisky?

Bauman released the bars and jumped to the floor. He remembered immediately.

1898. St. Petersburg. The Peter and Paul Fortress. Lieutenant Shuisky, the unhappy rebel and poet.

## *Chapter XVII*

## FROM THE OTHER WORLD

In 1898 when Bauman was imprisoned in the Peter and Paul Fortress, his fellow prisoner had been an officer, Lieutenant Shuisky, arrested for organizing a mutiny in the army. They had been in adjacent cells, had exchanged messages by rapping on the wall and had even talked during exercise in the prison yard. They had always been taken out for exercise at the same hour.

It had been Bauman's second year in the fortress and everyone there knew that he was due to be exiled without trial. For that reason he could do very much as he pleased and was allowed to talk during the time when the prisoners exercised in the yard. The lieutenant had been inexperienced in politics; he was simply a rebel and

a romantic—an adventure-seeking romantic of the kind to be found only among the bankrupt nobility, whose only possessions were genealogical tables, coats-of-arms, and swords. His romanticism took the form of writing poetry, very bad poetry at that. He had often recited his poems during the exercise, since the warders had raised no objections.

Was it possible that this was the same man?

The eyes were those of a stranger; Bauman had never seen them before. There was nothing in them that even slightly resembled the eyes of the lieutenant he had known. People cannot change beyond recognition as this man had done, even if they are mentally unbalanced, Bauman argued to himself. Now there was himself. He had hardly changed at all during these years. Even this madman should have recognized him, because, after all, "Blanqui" was not such a hopeless case. He was enjoying the tea Bauman had made and was behaving quite well; there was neither the crazy light nor the dull apathy in his eyes. He had given Bauman a very intelligent, clear description of life in the prison: at what time the boiling water was brought round, when the prisoners were taken out to exercise, and how much better the dinner was than in other prisons—porridge, for instance, every day, with pork fat.

"Do they let you have books?"

"The Bible and story books, or rather the Bible and other story books. For example, stories by Hauff, about the dead hand and the captain who was nailed to a mast, the nail passing straight through his head. Have you read it? Great stuff!"

His eyes began to grow dull. He rubbed his hands.

"I prefer poetry," Bauman said, keeping a close eye on the old man. The lines of his forehead, nose,

and chin were definitely familiar. "I like poetry very much."

A light flashed for a second in the old man's eyes. It gleamed and then vanished. Bauman thought hard. The poetry of the lieutenant he had known in the Peter and Paul Fortress had been definitely bad, and bad poetry is difficult to remember. That was the surest test of poetry. Good poetry instantly finds a niche for itself in the mind. With an effort he managed to recall a few lines:

*Man's dreams come true: from southern mains*
*The nations march to northern seas,*
*And soon the dauntless seaman gains*
*O'er barren waves new victories.*

He paused in anticipation. The lunatic stared with unblinking eyes at Bauman. Bauman said nothing but smiled gently. The madman returned the smile—his disfigured mouth setting in soft lines:

*Those dreams in days of yore took root,*
*And soon shall Labour see the fruit*
*Of Love, and Hope, and Liberty.*

The man put out his hand and said very softly:

"Bauman?"

Bauman looked round at the door. The peep-hole was closed. They shook hands. It was Shuisky, of course. The lieutenant from the Peter and Paul Fortress. His fingers and lips trembled, his eyebrows moved restlessly, but there was no sign of insanity in his voice, when, stammering with emotion, he said:

"To tell you the truth I recognized you when we were fighting. But you have to be careful here. You never know who they might send in to spy on you. True, I gave the last informer they put in here a good mauling!"

Bauman frowned.

"You're joking, I hope."

"Not at all," Shuisky laughed. "I broke his arm and nose, and I'm very happy about it. Ever since I came here they have been sending in informers. They are trying to establish whether I'm really mad or just pretending. At first I used to joke with the gentlemen, but later I began knocking them about. I had to put an end to it. After the lesson I gave the last one I warned them that I'd kill the next man they'd send to me, finish him off completely."

Bauman remembered the sniggering in the office. "He'll fix him."

"When you came in I didn't recognize you at first. I had been sleeping. And then you don't wear a beard as you did when I knew you. That changes appearances greatly. I recognized you only when I stretched out for your throat. I'm insane, you know." He burst into laughter—unpleasant, hollow laughter. "There are plenty of things to send you mad, eh? If I hadn't gone mad, I would have been hanged long ago. I don't intend to dangle at the end of a rope—I'm going to go on living. As I was saying, as soon as I tried to get at your throat, I saw your eyes. Could it be Bauman? I asked myself. You know, your eyes easily give you away. One can't mistake you."

Bauman opened his eyes very wide and goggled at Shuisky.

"And supposing during the past few years I've become a secret police agent and I suggest you're only simulating madness?"

Shuisky shook his head.

"In the first place," he said, "your eyes would have betrayed you long before I betrayed myself to you. Human eyes are amazing! One look and everything was clear."

"You've forgotten the second point," Bauman interrupted him curtly.

He had interrupted him deliberately. He had to make quite sure, once and for all, whether Shuisky was sane or not."

"The second point?" said Shuisky, and a worried look flickered on his face for a moment. "What was I going to say? Oh, yes! I wanted to say that when we were fighting you noticed the warder watching through the peep-hole, I suppose. If you had been one of them he would have come to the rescue. But he passed on, and that told me everything. I stopped fighting."

Yes, that was exactly what had happened.

"And another thing," said Shuisky, wiping his forehead, "even if you do say anything, it will only prolong the probationary period, that's all. The professors and medical experts have already registered me as incurable, you understand. Professors are stubborn people. They stand up for their science. And quite right, too! If their conclusions are to be challenged by every fool in the secret service, then why the devil pay them money? Once a commission of experts has signed a protocol, they'll continue to prove I'm mad no matter what I do."

Shuisky had passed the test. Bauman now addressed him in a more business-like manner.

"Tell me what happened to you after I left the Peter and Paul Fortress. Were you tried?"

The old man nodded.

"They gave you hard labour?"

Shuisky again nodded.

"Where did you serve the sentence?"

"In the Orel Central."

"But that's a penal settlement!"

Shuisky shook his head:

"It's a hard labour penal settlement, all right. But they send political prisoners there, too. Those they mean

to keep in solitary confinement. Those whom the powers that be have marked down for annihilation. Because the Orel Central is a death camp, only there the process of dying drags on for months. Death rolls along, so to say, like a freight train, stopping at all the sidings." He must have liked the comparison, for he clicked his tongue:

"Do you want me to tell you about it?"

Bauman scrutinized him carefully:

"Perhaps it would be better not to. Why get yourself worked up and all to no purpose?"

"To no purpose?" Shuisky laughed. "Maybe that's where you'll find yourself. They prefer sending people with eyes like yours to their death."

## *Chapter XVIII*

## THE OREL CENTRAL

He told his story, pacing the cell with quick, jerky steps:

"Well, then. The Orel Central—I'll begin from the time you arrive there. Of course you have to understand that you get there by stages, a party of convicts in chains, with shaved head, talking in thieves' slang. You've probably been through these stages with criminals and so I shan't go into details. Once in the prison, the party is taken straight to the bath-house, without even a look-in at the office. In the ante-room of the bath-house is a table, with the prison governor seated at it, a list of names before him. Between that table and the door of the bath-house stand about sixty warders, lined up in two rows facing each other, forming a sort of corridor. The names of the arrivals are called out in alphabetical order. When you enter you have to take off your clothes, underwear included, of course, and the chain

rests. You know what a chain rest is? They're something like leather bracelets and you wear them under the chains so that the iron does not cut into your legs. It's tight with them, but the chains don't bite into the flesh.

"Well, off go the chain rests. Naked, only in chains, you approach the table. No one says anything. The governor makes a mark in the list and orders: 'Take him!' At this command the warder who is to hand you over, who led you naked to the table, gives you a punch that knocks you into the corridor of warders: 'To the bath-house, march!' Then you just run the gauntlet. The warders each have different 'weapons': whips, sticks, keys. And each uses on you whatever he has. Most of them, however, use their fists. Later I realized that their fists were exceptional. I fell down before I had gone half-way. I regained consciousness in the bath-house, on the floor. Someone was pouring water over me. My first thought was: 'Thank God, it's over!' No sooner had the thought crossed my mind than a face bent over me and said: 'So you've come to!' The next moment the zinc edge of a wooden pail smashed into my teeth. I lost consciousness again, and when I came to I was again having cold water poured over me. I did not open my eyes to avoid getting beaten again. But my eyelashes, damn them, fluttered and gave me away. A boot kicked me in the stomach: 'Pretending, are you!' "

Shuisky shut his eyes and sat down on the pallet, gasping for breath. The pallet had not been taken away as the warder had promised. Bauman touched his shoulder softly:

"Don't go on. Why dig all that up? It's past and we'll talk of something else."

"No!" Shuisky cried stubbornly. "We'll talk of it! We've got to! It's got to be shouted from the house-tops! I'm not the only one. They've got fifteen hundred con-

victs there. Thousands go to their graves through the Central. They go by a terrible road; there's no horror story to compare with it. I mentioned Hauff—the dead hand and the nail through the skull. That's mere child's play. It's nothing at all compared with what goes on in tsarist penal settlements. You've got to shout about it so that everyone will know, now and for all time. You've got to tell them what a tsarist penal settlement is! They bring in a strong, healthy young fellow and after the first bath they lead out a broken, weakened man, coughing up blood. And in a year he's a skeleton, a shadow, a ghost. He can walk only by clinging to a wall. Before I was arrested I used to be able to bend horseshoes; I could tie an iron bar into a knot—and now—look at me!"

He threw open his shirt. Bauman again saw the hollow chest, overgrown with white hair and covered with weals. It was an appalling sight.

"In the bath-house they broke two ribs for me," he said, speaking more calmly. "But that was only the beginning. A feature of the Orel Central is that you get beaten every day and you can't escape it, no matter what you do."

His hand slipped down along his stomach. One of his fingers touched a button on his drawers. Shuisky bent his head and looked at it attentively:

"Here's a button, for instance. In the Central the prisoners are examined every day. A thorough examination. They make you undress completely and look—what was I saying? Oh yes, the button. Well, the governor looks you over and..."

He got up, set his feet apart, bent his head forward bull-like, and in a strange, abrupt, hoarse voice he growled:

" 'Why have you got two button-holes in your trousers—and only one button? That won't do!'

"Bash! The first blow comes from him. But it's only the signal, as it were. The warders finish the job.

"The next day you sew on a second button—it's quite true that your trousers have two button-holes. Again the examination.

" 'Why two buttons? Dandying yourself up, eh? One button doesn't satisfy you, eh? Wasting government property!'

"Bash! And again the warders make mincemeat out of you.

"Everything there is centred around these bashings. They knock you about in your cell, in the corridors, on the stairs. They're past-masters at knocking people about on the stairs. There was never a case, you know, of a convict just falling on the stairs, although the first blow was always enough to knock you off your feet. You hurtle down the steps, but before your head hits against anything, another warder gives you a punch with his fist and you go farther down to the next fist, and so it goes on until you reach the bottom. That's where you finally fall."

Shuisky fell silent. He shook his head in thought.

"It was terrible," he continued. "They say a cat has nine lives. But that's nothing to what a man has. If a cat were to be shut up in the Orel Central it would die in two hours. But human beings live for years. And without any medical assistance."

"How's that? Fifteen hundred men—and not even a doctor?"

"They've got one!" Shuisky laughed. "Rykhlinsky. It's worth while remembering his name. But the sick ward in the Central is nothing but a flaying-house. I went once. Only once in all the two years I was there. As soon as I opened the door, the doctor shouted: 'Tramp!' They've got no use in the Central for decent words like 'convict' or 'prisoner.' 'Tramp! Stay where you are!

Don't come within five steps of me. Report what's the matter with you.'

"I was foolish enough to ask:

" 'Excuse me, sir, but how can you examine me from that distance?'

" 'What? Show him how tramps are examined.'

"And the ward assistant 'examined' me—in the teeth."

He shut his eyes again.

"The first month is especially difficult. That's the probationary period—when they decide whether the convict is fit to be 'reformed.' That's the official word for it. During that month they knock you about for everything.

"At the examination they ask you: 'Why are you looking downcast? You've got to look happy.'

"Then you get bashed about.

"Or: 'Why are you looking at the ceiling?'

"You reply as respectfully as you can—otherwise you know they'll skin you:

" 'I'm looking to make sure there are no cobwebs.'

" 'Ah! You're not cleaning the cell properly if you think there are cobwebs!'

"You get bashed about again.

"But there's a much easier way to earn a bashing.

" 'Why is his voice so disgusting? Perhaps I'm mistaken?' the governor says to a warder.

" 'It is disgusting, your honour.'

" 'Let him have it, then! Perhaps that'll change his voice!' "

Shuisky stopped for a moment, then added:

"The probationary period can be prolonged. I don't know how long yours will be, but mine was eight months. With criminals—murderers and so on—they are much

more lenient, of course. I didn't know whether I was alive or dead until I finally put on a cross."

"A cross?" Bauman asked. "How do you mean?"

"An ordinary cross. I wore it round my neck. You're not supposed to be without one there. Every evening, after testing the bars with a mallet—that's done all the time to make sure they're not filed—the warder asks the men who are not wearing crosses:

" 'Got a cross?'

" 'No.'

"As soon as you say that he brings the mallet down on your chest:

" 'That's where it's got to hang—remember!'

"I stood it for eight months, then put one on to escape those blows on the chest at least!"

## *Chapter XIX*

## COTTON

A long silence followed; Bauman thought Shuisky had stopped telling his story. But at last he took up his tale again:

"After my probation was over I was put to work carding cotton—why, does that surprise you? The Central has a special cotton department, where cotton is carded. The contractor is a man named Grayevsky. Did you ever hear of him? Well, then you must know all about it." He smiled again in a sickly, tragic way. "If you go to Orel—you'll most likely work on Grayevsky's machines. He's got a long-term agreement with the Central. He's even built a shed at his own expense—made of planks and without windows; houses the cotton-carding machines, a press, and a shredding machine. Have you ever seen them? Well, you will. Everyone has to go through it, otherwise you can't call it hard labour! The

machines are heavy and out of date. You can easily understand that. A contractor isn't likely to buy new ones for convicts. And there's no driving power either—you realize that also. Why use electricity or steam when you've got convict labour! They turn the machines by hand and that costs nothing, doesn't run into any expense.

"And we turned those handles incessantly from six in the morning till eight in the evening. You have to put out 200 kilograms a day; if you don't you get flogged. They've got a special way of doing it there. Shall I tell you? You don't want me to? It's a boring tale, and I hardly remember the details. While they flog you, you remember only up to the thirtieth stroke, sometimes only the twenty-fifth. After that you're in a daze and nothing registers. The usual dose is—ninety-nine. Why ninety-nine and not a round hundred, you may ask? Because by law the governor of the prison at his own discretion may deal out only up to one hundred strokes. Permission from the Ministry is required for a hundred and more. It's not worth while entering into a whole correspondence for the hundredth stroke!

"I think I've told you we didn't cost the authorities anything. Well, that's not quite true. We were paid for our work. We got the tremendous sum of ten kopeks a month. In twenty years' hard labour you could therefore earn about twenty-five rubles, even more: for special zeal and overtime there was an extra two kopeks a month. As a matter of fact it was no easy job, earning the extra two kopeks. Floggings and beatings lowered the speed at which you could work. Even the most experienced convict could not help making a slip and getting a flogging for it; a penal servitude settlement has more rules than a mathematics textbook. The discipline is more strict than in a guards regiment. Before roll-call, for instance, the men in the solitary confinement cells had to stand motionless at attention before the peep-hole for fifteen min-

utes. God help you if you made the slightest movement! You had to stand there frozen to the spot, because you never knew exactly when the governor was going to take a peep at you. He wears soft felt boots and you can't hear him. And if he catches you moving!... Then you had to doff your cap to the warder when he was precisely fifteen steps away—no nearer, no farther. The fireworks began if you made a mistake. And you had to calculate what sort of strides he would take when he measured the distance.

"But I've digressed again—it's very hard not to do so. I ought to be telling you how we carded the cotton. But we'll leave that for another time. Let's go straight to the end, shall we? I'm tired for today. There were sixty of us working in the shed. The overseer was a man named Vetrov. In the Central they were all beasts, but Vetrov was the worst of the lot. He always carried a whip, a special knotted whip. Even a light lash would draw blood. But the way Vetrov handled it! I can't even begin to describe how he tortured us! You can understand the type of man he was when I tell you that we stood him up to the hour when we learned that he was being transferred and that the next day would be his last with us. As soon as we found that out, all sixty of us thought as one man: 'Going away? Him? Oh, no! We won't let him go!' You understand?"

"Yes," Bauman said thickly. "You killed him."

"We did. Yes, of course," Shuisky nodded and again looked like a madman, so terribly like a madman that the warder who had just opened the peep-hole hastily closed it. "He had come into the shed to amuse himself for the last time. That was what he said: 'To amuse myself.' But before he could lash out at the first man..."

"Was it you?"

"...he hit him over the head with the first thing he could lay hands on. You see, we weren't prepared in

any way. Sixty men can't make preparations and it would have been wrong to select one man for the job because all sixty of them wanted to kill him. If I had killed him by myself—it would have been murder not justice.

"We did not make preparations because all of us wanted to have an equal hand in it, both myself and the convicts. We left it to chance, and quite by chance the man he first approached had nothing to hand but an axe. An axe—that meant that he killed Vetrov instantly, with the first blow, and the other fifty-nine judges would have had nothing to do, if two warders hadn't happened to come in with Vetrov. It all came as such a surprise to them that later they couldn't remember who had actually struck Vetrov down. There was a rush to get away, but one of the fellows had already pulled Vetrov's revolver out of the holster and had taken aim and shot one of the warders in the neck, bringing him to the ground. The third warder had a rifle, but his hands were chopped with an axe before he could fire. But we did not succeed in surrounding him. He slipped out and ran off shouting for help. Then this is what happened... To this day I can't understand why the shouting made all sixty men scamper away and hide as best they could—behind bales of cotton and sacks of boon... Only three men stayed behind. They picked up the revolvers and the discarded rifle, and that was why they were killed on the spot by the first volley when the soldiers broke into the shed. Two others, who were not well concealed, were also shot..."

"And what about those in hiding?"

"They did not look for us; maybe because they were as much afraid of us as we were of them. They stood together in a bunch with their rifles pointing in all directions and shouted for us to come out singly. They had to stand there for a long time because each of us thought: 'Why should I be the first? He'll get it worse than all

the rest, even worse than the men already killed.' Only when we heard the cry of the first man to show himself: 'A-a-a...' (that long drawn-out cry still rings in my ears; I shall never forget it), only then did we all crawl out. Yes, that's what we did; we *crawled.*"

"That's enough!" Bauman said and got up. "You're completely worked up. It's bad for you."

'Nonsense!" said Shuisky, cutting him short. "Anyway, there's nothing more to tell. Naturally I found myself in hospital. Later I was 'gently' questioned. They used the word 'gently' in the old days. It was then that I lost the rest of my teeth. Finally, I had a brain wave. I demanded to see the chief public prosecutor. I said I had information concerning a most important state secret. He came. I told him I was Blanqui. He personally smashed my nose, presuming I was playing the fool. I was flogged. But once I had hit upon my idea, nothing they did could change my mind. I insisted I was Blanqui. In the end they had to call in the doctors. Well, it wasn't difficult to pull the wool over their eyes. The test they gave me was nothing compared to what I had been through at the Central. Especially as they put me in with the violent cases. All I had to do was to watch what the others did. With them I chased the warders, did not let them wash me or give me a haircut, and I made believe I did not feel their pin-points. Idiots! After Vetrov's tricks their pin-points were like caresses. To cut a long story short, they came to the conclusion that I was insane. The conclusion of the professors was sent to the district authorities and I was moved here to await trial. Well I'm having a good time here, although as I've already told you, they continue to send in spies to me..."

He turned and faced the door; a key was grating in the lock. His face instantly assumed a haughty, crazed

expression. The warder stopped just inside the door. Shuisky yelled out in a rage:

"You've come again before I rang! The next time it happens I shall leave your filthy hotel immediately!"

The warder looked past him and said to Bauman:

"Follow me. And bring your things with you."

"He was to take his things? That meant he was not being taken out for questioning." He was right; together they just went to the floor below.

Bauman found himself in another cell, this time in truly solitary confinement.

## *Chapter XX*

## THE STRUGGLE GOES ON

*"TO V. I. LENIN AND N. K. KRUPSKAYA*

*September 4, 1904*

"*This is Kol writing from gaol.* After many trials and hardships our whole company has gathered in the Taganka. When we got our bearings we decided to continue the struggle against the Mensheviks, and scum in general! Our forces are Kol, Ruben, Poletayev, Solomon Chernomordik (real name), and Absolute. We heard of the notorious 'manifesto' of the Central Committee and of its conference with the Mensheviks that ended in a decision to co-opt them. Consequently, our hands are now free and the political rottenness of our C.C. has at last become evident to all. We are confident that in Russia there will now be a real *uprising* against our false central organizations. We have only to raise the banner of rebellion. And we want to do it; our patience has given out. High time they were told the truth to their faces. We are quite confident that everyone who has any class-

consciousness at all and who values the honour of the Party will join us enthusiastically when we expose the policy of this foreign cesspool that has had time to infect the atmosphere around it with its stuffy sectarianism and foul desire to settle the Party conflict 'in the family circle,' on the quiet, over a bottle of beer or a cup of tea. First we shall issue an appeal to the committees, calling on them to rally to our banner, and we shall try to explain to them the situation in the Party. This appeal will be ready within the next few days. We also intend publishing a leaflet to expose the activity of the Mensheviks, Plekhanov's base treachery, and the worthlessness of our C.C., which has now dug its own grave by its complete inability to work and passed sentence on itself by its latest conduct. We hope to be able in one way or another to get all this into print and distribute it throughout Russia."

The pen stopped for a second. Could they really do all that? Sufficiently broad, stable contact had been established between the prisoners in solitary confinement and the outside world. But on the technical side ... there had been the hitch in publishing the leaflet Bauman had written the previous week at Kozuba's request. They had not succeeded in setting up the printshop, although all the equipment had been saved. They could not rent a house—for lack of funds. There were no people available for this work.

"All we need is help in getting more people. Send August here again to do some liaison work. And send us more people if at all possible; of course you know how many we've lost. We consider that whatever happens, the Old Man should organize a literary group in order to keep up a systematic attack on the dying *Iskra*. Without that our hands are tied. Now, when principles

are being bartered right and left, it is ridiculous to have no newspaper of our own. The time has come when only determination and the most ruthless attack can straighten things out for us; otherwise all will be lost for a long time. We must take advantage of the unrest in Russia. In a year's time everything will get bogged down and it will become hard to get Mother Russia on the move."

At this point the pen again stopped. A smile played round the writer's mouth. The Old Man would understand that he was deliberately writing about things getting bogged down in order to "add fuel to the fire." Naturally there could be no question of Russia getting bogged down again. There was a strike on at the Putilov Works, another in Sormovo, while the lesser strikes were too numerous to count. The liberals had begun to stir. In November they would be having a congress of "town and country leaders." There was a great deal about it in the newspapers, so obviously they were confident that it would not be banned. The liberal bourgeoisie were bold when the workers' and peasants' movement was on the upgrade, because they had no forces of their own. And if they began to talk in a deep, confident bass, that meant... Yes, and in the prison, too, it had become easier. That was also a sign of the times.

The lock turned. He hardly had time to lay a book over the sheet of paper.

"You're wanted for questioning," the warder said.

"I shan't go."

The warder shifted his weight from one foot to the other.

"You must have your little joke!"

"I'm not joking. Especially as I've got nothing to tell them. And the weather—take a look through the bars—rain and mud. I shan't go."

"What's a little rain? You'll go in a carriage."

"I've told you once and I'm telling you again. I shan't go."

He brought his hand down on the table. The warder swung the door to and fro irresolutely:

"You want me to report that?"

"Yes. I'm busy."

The lock clicked. The warder walked away. The writer finished his letter:

"Reply as quickly as you can. You can use the old address. Warm greetings to all friends. *Godfather*"

Outside the door all was silent.

## *Chapter XXI*

## IN THE CEMETERY

A team of six horses with swaying plumes pulled a hearse through the gates of the Vagankovskoye Cemetery. Kozuba stepped aside to let it pass, and at the same time screwed up his eyes to read the inscription on the black and white ribbons hanging from the rattling porcelain wreaths:

In memory of
Collegiate Assessor
VIKENTY PAVLOVICH TRIROGI
from his bereaved colleagues at the Excise Department

The "colleagues" straggled behind the coffin, a sparse flock. Most of them were stout and had purple noses—at the Excise Department vodka flowed freely.

REST IN THE LORD
EMPLOYEES OF No. 1 DISTILLERY

Kozuba smiled, winked at a worker walking behind him, and mingled with the Excise Department officials

who turned to look at the workers in indignant surprise.

The policemen at the gates removed their caps and crossed themselves. Actually it was not a bad thing for the revolution that the police were God-fearing. That was rather an amusing thought but Kozuba had to put it aside just then. Once through the gates, the hearse moved faster, the choir began to sing "To Our Heavenly Father," and the Excise Department officials glared at the people following them. Kozuba and his comrades dropped behind a little, and finally turned into a side path.

. . . . . .

The path led deep into the cemetery. They passed the leaden-domed church among the trees. Kozuba nodded to the right.

"This is where we turn off, Pyotr."

"But it isn't the place," Pyotr said, surprised. "We should turn off by sausage-maker Varsonofyev's grave. It's longer if we go your way."

"Do what I say!" Kozuba said sternly. "You just obey your elders. If we take your path we might have an unpleasant encounter. That buzzard Mikhalchuk is near that grave, there."

"Who-o?" Pyotr drawled, following Kozuba's gaze.

There were some people round a priest standing just off the main path, near a white wooden cross. The priest was waving a censer—evidently a funeral service was in progress.

"Who is this Mikhalchuk you're talking about?"

"A bad egg we knew at the Proshin Mill. The workers ran him out during the strike in 1902. One of the boss's men, a sneak, and, above all, very thick with the secret police. We lost sight of him. I see he's back in circulation. It's the work of the secret police, I'm sure. If he recognizes me I may find myself in trouble. I can't risk that just now."

They turned and by a roundabout way reached another path leading to a lonely spot in the large cemetery. Sitting on grave stones among neglected, tumble-down, long-forgotten crosses beneath the birch trees was a small group of workers.

"Good day, comrades! Where's Irina?" Kozuba asked, coming up. "Has anyone seen her recently?"

No one replied. Kozuba shook his head anxiously:

"I hope they haven't pulled her in. She went off on some business and hasn't shown up since. Shall we wait a little?"

"We can't," one of the men objected. "We're on the night shift, and we're already late. We should have started long ago. Is there much business?"

"There certainly is," Kozuba said reflectively. "Only there's no one to turn to for advice—we'll have to make our own decisions, lads. There's a letter from abroad. I can't read it out to you, I haven't got it on me—I was afraid to carry it around. Well then, comrades. Here's everything in my own words. We've often said that things aren't right in the Party and you yourselves know that's true, because of what's happening in your factories. This isn't the first time the Mensheviks have caused trouble. Well, the letter from abroad says that the Mensheviks have now brought matters to such a pass that abroad the position can no longer be endured. They have brought confusion into all the work. Then, the news from the front is getting worse each month. There's never before been such famine in the country. From your own experience in the factories, you know that every week more and more people are being thrown out of work. At the factories..."

"The factory people are getting a move on—that's a fact."

"The revolution is on the way, comrades. Who is going to lead it, who, if not the Party, is going to show

the way? That's what the Party's for. But when we start the revolution we've got to march in step, all together, shoulder to shoulder without any arguing. And the leadership must be real."

Pyotr snorted:

"Not like in Manchuria."

"Exactly," Kozuba seconded. "Good leadership is most important in every war. The soldier can be the bravest of the brave, but you won't get anywhere if the general's a fool. Are our soldiers and sailors so bad? Yet they're being beaten. And all because the generals at headquarters are fools and scoundrels. We've got a war on as well—against the tsar and the capitalists. How are we to conduct it? The Second Congress told us correctly and in plain language, and the leadership went ahead correctly with the plan, too. But the Mensheviks came along with their sabotage. You remember, the Rook explained how matters stood then—how the Mensheviks had taken control of the *Iskra* and the Party Council. And now the Central Committee, as well, has gone over to them."

There was a stir among the men sitting on the graves beneath the birch trees.

"You mean everyone is against Lenin?"

"Everyone?" Kozuba wrinkled his nose scornfully. "Who's everyone? As far as I know practically none of the people elected at the Congress are any longer on the Central Committee. Some were arrested, others resigned when the Menshevist stink was turned on. However you look at it, the fact is that the declaration issued by the C.C. makes you want to spit in disgust and use bad language. With Menshevist leadership we'll be worse off than the soldiers fighting the Japanese in Manchuria."

"We've got to kick them out, that's all!" said Vladimir, a railway man, resolutely. "Here in Moscow we no

longer talk to them. We'll break away from the Central Committee, too, if it's sided with them."

"Just look at the facts. What have we got from the Central Committee? For eight months now we've had no funds and no literature. True we get the *Iskra*, but everything in it is a pack of lies. It can only harm the workers if we give it to them, so we don't."

Kozuba raised his hand:

"That's just it! That's exactly what I wanted to tell you. Since the Central Committee went over to the Mensheviks, twenty-two people representing the Bolsheviks and the Russian underground Committees have met, together with Lenin, in Geneva."

"Twenty-two? That means from all over Russia!"

"Twenty-two Committees, I'm telling you, have rallied to Lenin. They have decided to have no truck with the Central Committee, now it's turned traitor, and to form their own centre—the Bureau of the Bolshevik Committees..."

"Quite right!"

"... and to make the Bureau responsible for the leadership of the work. At the same time they demanded that the Third Congress be called immediately. The Congress will put matters into shape, you may be sure. The overwhelming majority of the Party's illegal workers on the spot supports Lenin. Well, and now we have this letter from the Bureau and it says we've got to conclude..."

"What's there to conclude? Everything's clear. We'll pass a resolution of affiliation. We'll each sign for our own district."

"Why? That would be entirely out of order. We'll put the matter before the district meetings and get resolutions passed—that will make it more binding. That will make it plain that the working people of Moscow are on Lenin's side. Only, Kozuba, you'll have to see about the resolution."

"Well, I don't know about that. I'm not so good at that sort of thing," Kozuba grunted.

"Is there no way of getting the comrades in the Taganka to write it?"

"I must confess," said Kozuba with a smile, "I'd decided not to send news about the Bureau to the prison for the time being."

"Why?"

Everyone was sincerely surprised. Kozuba sighed:

"The way I see it is that the minute they find out it will be torture for them to remain in prison, behind bars. Better let them think that outside there's nothing much doing. In the meantime we might get up a plan to help get them out..."

"Out of the Taganka? I have my doubts about that, brother. Taganka's a tough nut to crack!"

"Even fortresses get taken," said Kozuba and winked significantly. "Well, it's decided then. Irina and I will see about the resolution together, that's if the girl isn't lost for good and all."

Pyotr looked into the distance, past the head-stones of the cemetery.

"Why should she be lost? Ah, and here she is, talk of the devil! I'll be damned if anyone can recognize her in that widow's outfit."

Irina came up and threw up a long thick veil.

"Everything's all right," she said, slightly out of breath after her rapid walk. "I've found what we wanted, Kozuba."

## *Chapter XXII*

## REPLY

The reply from abroad came quickly. In less than a month the convict whose duty it was to tidy up Bauman's cell and who acted as go-between for the political pris-

oners, brought Bauman a letter in code, bearing a Swiss stamp. Bauman had already been informed that the letter had arrived—a message had been tapped out on the prison walls from cell to cell, storey to storey. Bauman not only knew of the existence of the letter, but also that it was written in a code invented by Absolute. He knew the code and was able, therefore, to decipher it rapidly, although the letter was quite long.

*"September 23, 1904, Geneva*

"Dear friends,

"We were overjoyed to receive your letter. It was like a breath of fresh air and all of us have drawn energy from it. Go ahead with your plan. It is splendid and will be of tremendous importance. We are waiting impatiently for more letters from you. Your advice about publishing facilities has already been carried out in part. We have people who will write and there is plenty of material ready. In general, we are all in high spirits and have many plans. The Old Man has also begun to work. The correspondence to and from Russia has livened up. And now, I hope, the people will soon begin to group themselves. You'll learn the particulars about the Bolshevik publishing business from our mutual friends, to whom we are writing in detail. We can't use the forwarding agency as it is in the hands of the C.C. Well, I think that's all. Warmest greetings, dear comrades, and we wish you health and strength.

*Old Man & Co."*

That same day a reply went from the Taganka to the effect that the leaflet—mentioned in Kol's first letter—signed by nineteen comrades in prison, had been written and passed on to the outside world; that people had been added to the Moscow Committee, arrangements for

the printshop had been made, and the leaflets properly printed; that agitation was in progress for the convocation of the Third Congress of the Party; that although the news about the conference of the twenty-two and about the Bureau of Bolshevik Committees had arrived belatedly, the Moscow organization had agreed to join the Bureau without any urging from the comrades in the Taganka; that Bauman, to all intents and purposes, was still the leader of the Moscow workers as, thanks to the well-organized system of communications, he was being consulted on all matters and had the opportunity of giving his opinion and decision on every question.

It might also have been mentioned that the Moscow Committee was taking steps to get the comrades in the Taganka freed; that Irina had found a suitable house near the prison and that in two or three days' time work would begin on a tunnel; a plan of the Taganka had already been sent out from the prison. But such information could not be sent by letter, not even in code.

The letter was written, coded, and sent by the "usual channels," to use diplomatic language.

## *Chapter XXIII*

## SCRAPS OF INFORMATION

At midnight precisely, as was his habit, Evstraty Mednikov entered the low-ceilinged hall of the secret police department, where his agents were waiting for him. They were the men of the "Evstraty school," as they were respectfully referred to by the secret police not only in Moscow but also in St. Petersburg, because Mednikov's school was known throughout the Empire for its training of really first-class agents. It was not for nothing that illegal workers regarded Moscow as a dangerous place.

Not a single Committee lasted longer than three months; it was invariably "broken up," that is to say, its members were arrested.

As usual, the agents stood in the "regulation manner," or, to be more exact, in the usual pose of the police spy—feet planted rather wide apart, hands concealed behind backs. And the lesson on external observation tactics began in the usual way. Evstraty walked down the line, stopping in front of each agent to hear the report of his day's activity. Mednikov gave each a mark and analyzed his work from the tactical point of view, should need arise.

The man reporting was a swarthy, sparely-built agent, who, when Mednikov came up to him, cringed in an uncontrollable desire to be of service.

"Please, I ask you very earnestly, let me shadow someone else. Rivet's uninteresting. Trailing him only means losing a grip on the job. He runs round like a rabbit and doesn't notice anything; he's not a conspirator at all, just a fool."

"Give him Flier, Evstraty Petrovich," the man's neighbour said maliciously. "There's a man for you! He's never given anyone the chance to shadow him to the end —always gives you the slip. He's careful on going out into the street and checks up at every corner. A slippery customer, he is. We ought to pull him in, Evstraty Petrovich. We've been after him for a month and he hasn't given us a single line on anyone or to any house that could be watched. It's only a waste of men and money to keep on trailing him."

Evstraty grunted but said nothing. At the moment his mind was occupied with something else, and it was quite evident that he was not at all anxious about the "plotter" who among police agents had earned the illustrious nickname of "Flier," or about the bungler whom they called "Rivet."

He moved a step to the left, and faced the next agent; this man began his report with due zeal and ardour. But Mednikov looked on absently; he was thinking.

There was, indeed, plenty to think about. This was the third week that leaflets and proclamations had again been making daily rounds in the factories. The contents were most outrageous and at the foot of each leaflet were the disgraceful words:

Printshop of the Moscow Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.

Three weeks! And not a trace had been discovered of the perpetrators, although the whole "Evstraty school" had been put on the job and men had walked their legs off searching the city.

But all in vain! Absolutely nothing had been found. For the first time in Mednikov's experience he had failed to find even a hint of a clue.

The men had been ordered to report out of turn if they had discovered anything about the printshop. But no one had come forward. For that reason Mednikov walked with a heavy tread down the line of spies; he was only half-listening to their reports; why listen, when there was nothing in them about the case that interested him most.

He had not gone halfway down the line of men when he was summoned to his superior. Even as he opened the door of the chief's office, Evstraty realized from the colonel's expression that he was in for a rough passage.

In addition to the police colonel there was a spare, gaunt individual in the uniform of the Department of Prisons. He seemed at a loss and his face was uncommonly red for a man whose complexion was pale. The conversation had apparently taken a very unpleasant turn.

"Ah, Mr. Mednikov!" the colonel exclaimed with mock delight and rubbed his hands. "At last! You can't imagine how pleased I am to see you! Are you acquaint-

ed? This is the governor of the Taganka prison—my assistant, Mr. Mednikov. You may shake hands in mutual sympathy..."

Mednikov shook the officer's thin, clammy hand. There was something very much amiss—that was quite obvious.

"The governor, here," said the colonel, with a bow in the direction of the prison officer, "accuses you, Mr. Mednikov, as Head of the Political Investigation Department in Moscow, of having overlooked the fact that the local Bolshevist conspirators have for three months already—three months, do you hear!" the colonel's finger wagged in the air, "been in constant contact with prisoners in the Taganka and, in particular, with Nikolai Bauman, whom we all know. He alleges, further, that the manuscripts of all the Bolshevist proclamations, printed in Moscow during this period, emanated from the Taganka..."

Mednikov flared up:

"Accuses me? So I'm to blame if the prison administration can't see what's going on under its nose?"

"You, too, have a nose, as far as I can see," the governor interjected sharply. "Everything originates from here, from outside the prison. Behind bars they can't do anything without outside help. For instance, where did this paper come from? Not from outside?"

He produced a piece of foolscap folded into a thin strip. The colonel hastily unfolded it:

"Code."

Mednikov bent over it in his turn.

"Yes, a code," he confirmed.

At the top of the note was one uncoded line: "October 14. Geneva."

The colonel fixed an angry eye on Mednikov. The officer had been right. How could a note from Geneva have found its way into the prison, if not with help from

outside? It was perfectly clear that Mednikov had slipped up badly.

But Mednikov made no effort to deny it.

"We can't find out about things like this so long as we have no secret agent inside their organization," he said. "I'm not hiding the fact that *until* we get a reliable informer among the Bolsheviks, a permanent collaborator, we have no alternative but to work with people who can only get us scraps of information. It's not as reliable as we would like. As you know, external observation, by its very nature, cannot give complete results. But this correspondence (he nodded at the coded note which the colonel was still twisting with his fingers), discovered in the prison, already gives us a line..."

"The hell it does!" the colonel interrupted, wrinkling up his nose. "We must give credit where it is due—these people are not such louts as our agents. You haven't any line on it, at all! Of course, anyone can guess that the correspondence is carried by the convicts. As yet we haven't permitted the politicals to have either visitors or parcels. Therefore—it must be the convicts."

"The men who clean their cells, I'm sure," Mednikov said with conviction.

The governor sighed:

"No. For that job we select only those convicts who agree to act as our agents, as you know. I'm more inclined to believe it goes on when they are exercising in the yard."

"But how about this document?"

"It was found in the yard—must have been dropped by accident. We've got nothing to work on as all the politicals were exercising that day."

"Dropped?" Mednikov asked suspiciously. "I've yet to hear of political prisoners 'dropping' such documents. You may find that they threw it down deliberately, as a joke."

This apparently struck the colonel as being sound reasoning. He raised questioning eyes to the governor. The latter shook his head despondently:

"Hardly... Although you can expect anything of them. You can't imagine the sort of people they are. As the three of us are in the same boat and discussing trouble we all have to share, I'll admit frankly that I'm at my wits' end. You can never anticipate their tricks. For instance, one day I went to see this Bauman, you've just mentioned. There he stood in front of me beautifully shaved. He must have got a razor from somewhere; the barber hadn't been round that day. Prisoners are not allowed sharp objects, to say nothing of razors. But there he was freshly shaved. 'You've had a shave?' I asked. He laughed: 'Yes,' 'With what?' 'A razor.' 'Where is it?' He laughed again; and replied: 'Here, in the cell!' 'That's not possible.' 'You have my word of honour!'

"Naturally, I immediately ordered the warder to search the cell. You won't believe me, but we spent three quarters of an hour climbing and crawling all over the cell, and we searched Bauman, but we didn't find it."

"Just as I thought," said Mednikov. "He staged it all to make a fool of you. As for the razor, someone had brought it to him and taken it away again."

"If that were only true!" the governor exclaimed. "I naturally thought of that and gave him a piece of my mind. I reproached him for deceiving me, for behaving in a way one would scarcely expect from a political.

" 'I understand,' I said to him, 'that it must have been amusing for you to keep us fooling about for a little short of an hour, but, morally speaking, I consider it is unbecoming.'

"Well, what do you think happened next? Bauman frowned and said:

" 'I quite seriously told you the truth; it's simply that you are idiots! The razor *is* in the cell.'

" 'I don't believe you! Let me see it.'

" 'But will you return it?'

"Well, curiosity got the better of me.

" 'I shall,' I said.

" 'Word of honour?' he asked and looked me straight in the eye.

" 'You have the word of an officer,' I said. 'Here, all these warders are my witnesses.'

" 'All right,' he said. 'Leave the cell for a minute and don't come up to the door until I knock. And if you so much as open the peep-hole, I shan't be responsible for the consequences, you'll only have yourself to blame.'

"We walked out..."

"And you didn't open the peep-hole?" the colonel asked derisively.

"No." The governor sadly lowered his head. "You don't know this Bauman. He's a desperate fellow with some terrible trick or other up his sleeve all the time. Hardly had a minute gone by when he knocked. We entered and there was the razor on the palm of his hand. I took it to see if it was sharp—well, I could have started shaving myself right away."

The colonel gave a low whistle:

"That was put over well! And did you actually return it?"

"What a question!" the governor said, with a gesture of horror. "Of course not."

"What did he say?"

The governor looked away.

"Nothing much, the usual sort of thing. As I was saying one is helpless in this sort of position. No matter what you do they always find a way out. Actually, the best we could do would be to give them more freedom. Then they would not be so careful and would be sure to trip up sometime or other. That would give us an opportunity, provided we were successful, to find out a lot of

things. For that reason I have now made things easier for them, although already three months ago the warders reported that Bauman was carrying on a correspondence. The same applies to the others. In the women's ward, too."

"I can see that you've learned quite a lot!" Mednikov jeered. "Evidently the correspondence will continue."

"I don't think so," the governor said, shaking his head. "Bauman was transferred to a solitary cell long ago. It's as lonely as the grave—no communication whatever! And no exercising, either. The cell is swept out every third day in the presence of a warder. And the men who worked for the political prisoners have been arrested."

"That's the stuff," Mednikov muttered, screwing up his eyes. "Have you sent them over to us? I'll question them personally."

"They've already been questioned!" the colonel interrupted vexatiously. "I've looked into the matter myself. Obstinate swine. They maintain they don't know what we're talking about. You can't get anything out of them."

Mednikov stroked his left palm with his right hand: "They'll talk to me."

"With your tender handling, you think?" the colonel snorted. "Do you for a moment imagine that they got jam from me? I say you won't get anything out of these convicts. You can skin them alive, but if they've set their minds on it they won't say a word."

## *Chapter XXIV*

## THE BAKERS

There was panic. People were rushing down Tverskaya Street. From far off in Strastnaya Square, came the sound of firing.

Kozuba grabbed the shoulder of a worker running past him:

"What's up?"

The worker was winded. He did not reply at once:

"Filippov's bakers are rioting..."

"A strike, I know," Kozuba interrupted him.

But the worker waved his hand:

"They're rioting, I tell you. The bakers are shooting. They've locked themselves up in the bakery and are firing away. The whole area is seething with troops! There's blood all over the street."

Kozuba released the shoulder. The man moved away. He had calmed down a little, but he still walked unsteadily.

A short worker with dark hair, walking along with Kozuba, asked in alarm:

"Did he say the Filippov bakers? Isn't that in Irina's district?"

Kozuba nodded gloomily:

"I've thought of that already. That girl's been impatient to start things for a long time. I told her she was to wait. Here, put your best leg forward!"

They hurried quickly up the street. Pedestrians were still running from the opposite direction. Shouts, whistles, and cat-calls followed them...

"Where're you going? They're shooting there, d'you hear?"

A heavy fire engine, its siren screeching, thundered past Kozuba and his companion. A detail of mounted police galloped out of a side turning. An officer, swaying in his saddle, was holding his gloved hand to a cut on his cheek. The white suède glove was torn. A volley rang out ahead of them.

"That's the soldiers!" Kozuba whispered, already running. "They fire all together. Our people still don't

know how to fire like that. They fire single and at random."

That same moment, as though to confirm his words, Kozuba and his companion heard the rattle of irregular firing.

A line of soldiers with bristling bayonets moved down the street, closing in on the crowd that was hurrying away. A foppish district police inspector, his patent-leather boots shining, ran in front of the soldiers, his knees coming up smartly:

"Back! They'll fire!"

Kozuba and his companion pressed close to the dark arched entrance to the nearest courtyard. The place was already full of people; it provided an excellent view of the huge Filippov bakery.

Fire ladders were going up slowly along the walls. Bricks, sticks, and clanging sheets of iron rained down on the glittering bronze helmets of the firemen. Random shots were fired through the broken windows of the upper floor. In the middle of the street stood an officer, naked sword in hand, his uniform disordered just as though he had been engaged in hand-to-hand fighting; he shouted hoarsely to the scattered soldiers:

"Rapid fire! Volunteers, to the ladders! Forward!"

The bugler blew the signal for the attack. The rapid, hurricane fire brought the plaster down off the building. The "volunteers," heavy boots hampering their movements, climbed warily up the fire ladders. A crowd of other soldiers hammered on the high metal gates of the building with their rifle-butts, but all in vain.

The stones came thicker and faster and the firing grew heavier. A high, ringing voice was heard from the

building, from the roof of one of the upper floors. The words were indistinct, but the chattering crowd behind Kozuba, which with him had pressed close to the cordon, instantly fell silent and heads were raised to look in the direction from which the voice had come.

A body hurtled through the air. Before Kozuba could make out whether the man had fallen from the ladder or the roof, a close circle formed and stretcher-bearers with red crosses on their sleeves hurried out from the chemist's shop at the corner. On the back of his neck Kozuba felt the hot breath of a labourer standing close behind him. By his irregular breathing Kozuba could tell that he was experiencing the same thoughts and fears.

"Hur-rah!" came a loud shout, almost in Kozuba's ear.

The soldiers forming the cordon hurriedly brought their rifles up to the ready. The cheer was taken up by others. It rolled down Tverskaya Street and was echoed from the roof of the Filippov bakery. The soldiers fell back from the gates, and some of them dragged the hoarse-throated officer, his head thrown back, along the pavement; the assault group scrambled down the ladders as fast as they could, overtaking their company which was rapidly retreating in disorder.

"Hur-rah!"

But again the notes of a bugle pierced the air. A fresh column of grenadiers marched down from Strastnaya Square. At a command they broke into a run, fanning out as they went.

"Hur-rah!"

This time the cheer came from the soldiers. Once more they rushed towards the ladders and the gate. A nimble corporal with waxed moustache climbed over the gates, tearing the skirt of his greatcoat on the sharp spikes at the top. The broken lock rattled to the ground. The rusty hinges creaked and a stream of soldiers

rushed in, shoulder to shoulder, bayonet following bayonet.

"The Battle of Poltava!" sniggered a townsman, standing next to Kozuba. But no sooner were the words out of his mouth than he looked about him and fell into startled silence.

For a second there was a lull, followed by desultory shooting inside the building and, later, a drawn-out dull explosion.

"D'you think it's a bomb?" the workman whispered. Kozuba nodded almost imperceptibly. He knew that the bakers had bombs.

The noise and the firing died away. A fat police colonel emerged from the entrance of the building opposite the bakery. He looked apprehensively at the roof, bending his thick bull neck, and moved forward confidently, taking off his cap and wiping his bald head which was covered with sweat in spite of the September cold.

## *Chapter XXV*

## "ALL BUT BURIED ALIVE..."

Soon the stretcher-bearers began carrying bodies out of the bakery and piling them on the waiting army carts. The crowd, pressing against the line of soldiers, watched with bated breath.

"My God, look how many!" one woman sobbed. "I've never seen so many dead in all my life."

"Just wait a while longer and you'll see more," Kozuba said through his teeth. "The worker has an account to settle. It'll be settled in full!"

"Look! There's a woman!"

The police were carrying a slight figure. The face was covered with a kerchief that was Irina's, without a doubt. Kozuba could not restrain himself:

"It's her!"

The words were whispered and were hardly distinguishable. But a heavy hand fell on Kozuba's shoulder:

"A friend of yours?"

Kozuba looked round. There stood a man, tall and broad, with moustache and side-whiskers of the kind policemen favoured. He was wearing an ill-fitting coat that was obviously not his own for it hung on him like a sack. Plainly he was one of the secret police.

Before Kozuba could make any reply the man blew a whistle, the crowd backed away, angry yet afraid, and the workman walked off indifferently, shoving his cap to the back of his head. Men he had never seen before gathered round Kozuba. The barrel of a pistol was pointed at his face.

"Here, let us through!"

One soldier stepped aside out of the cordon, and the group passed through and moved to the entrance of the bakery.

"Stop there! Don't load that corpse on..."

The policemen lowered a corpse to the pavement. They had been on the point of throwing it on to the body of the woman. The fat colonel listened to the hurried report and poked Kozuba in the shoulder:

"Did you recognize her? Who is she?"

"What are you talking about?" Kozuba asked sullenly.

"Permit me..." The man with the moustache raised his hand and almost touched his cap, but corrected himself the next moment. "I heard him cry out: 'It's her!' So he must know her. I have witnesses—see here..."

The foxy faces of several police agents appeared on all sides.

"'He must know her!'" Kozuba mimicked. "They were carrying men out and then, suddenly, there was a woman. Naturally, I was surprised. So you got a chance to show how zealous you are, to shine in the eyes of your superiors. You've got to use your brains in this business, my dear chap. You've got to know who ought to be roped in."

"Who are you, anyway?" the colonel asked sarcastically and extended his hand. "Is your passport on you?"

"Of course," Kozuba said very coolly and unbuttoned his light coat. "Nikolai Nikiforovich Kashkin, Honourable Citizen of the town of Serdobsk."

He gave the colonel his passport. The latter spat on his finger and turned over the pages: the police registration was in order, complete with stamps and seal.

"All right. I'll keep the passport," the colonel said with a nod. "We'll make inquiries. For the time being—you may go." He turned to the policemen. "Carry on!"

The corpse was raised from the pavement. That same moment a long, piercing cry caused a shudder to run through the crowd in the street. The "corpse" with the kerchief over its face moved. It raised a thin, pale arm to its head.

The people nearest to the cart rushed away. The colonel backed to the entrance of the building.

Kozuba sprang forward:

"She's alive!"

The hand removed the kerchief, revealing the face. The hair was matted under caked blood and the face was round, plump, and tanned.

It was not Irina.

Probably someone working in the bakery.

The woman raised herself. People ran to her from all directions. Kozuba took a few steps back,

turned round, and walked with a firm step through the cordon.

"That was close," he said, "she was all but buried alive!"

He reached the first turning and made off to the left, first walking quickly and then beginning to run. The workman was waiting for him at the far corner, in front of a billboard.

"How could you take such a risk!" he said, shaking his head reproachfully.

"Do you think I'm made of wood?" Kozuba retorted angrily. "She taught me to spell. In her study circle I saw the light of day. It wasn't easy to keep quiet; I thought she'd been killed. And as it turns out, it's not her at all."

"Not her?" the workman cried joyfully, seizing Kozuba by the coat. "Not her, you say?"

"That's what I said. But it won't be easy, either, if she's been arrested. That shooting means the gallows, as sure as I live."

"Like hell!" the workman smirked. "They wouldn't dare. It's not long now before we'll settle accounts. Why if bakers have started baking bombs instead of bread... Come on. Why are we standing here like dumb-bells!"

. . . . . .

They walked on for some time in silence.

"How did you get out of it?" the workman asked.

"Not worth talking about it," Kozuba said, puckering his brow. "Only I've lost the passport now. Ah well! It was a false passport anyway and it doesn't take long to get a new one. But my wife will have something to say about it; we've only just moved into our room and now we'll have to move out again."

## *Chapter XXVI*

## DELIVERED PERSONALLY BY THE PUBLIC PROSECUTOR

The key was turned twice in the lock with such obsequious haste that without even turning his head to look Bauman realized he was about to see someone important. Nor was he mistaken. A man still young but already wearing the braid of a general on his uniform and a gilt Lyceum badge on his right breast, walked through the heavy open door. He was tall and handsome.

He bowed and nodded with easy grace. His hair was combed and smoothed carefully.

"Permit me to introduce myself. I am the public prosecutor from the court of justice. We have been inquiring into your case for almost eighteen months. All that time you've been in solitary confinement... I considered it my duty to visit..."

Eighteen months? Was it that long? Bauman had lost all count of time in the loneliness of his cell. His watch had been taken away and the hours had simply merged into an endless span of time in the semi-darkness of this drab cell where even the sky was not visible through the thickly-barred window high up in the wall! Here one could never tell whether it was nighttime or merely a cloud shutting out the daylight, whether it was spring or merely the strong sunlight of a frosty winter's noon. The lamp burned day and night. One knew of the passage of time only from the regularity with which the meals were brought in; but as the food at dinnertime was the same as that at breakfast, the days passed in depressing monotony. Bauman had ceased to count them. Weeks would pass without his hearing human speech. He forgot the sound of his own voice and when he did speak to the

warder his voice seemed muffled, hoarse, and unpleasant. Though he was not prevented from rapping messages on the walls, he received no replies. The warder would watch through the peep-hole, smiling broadly. And during the whole of the time he had not received a single parcel. It was fortunate that he was allowed books. It had not occurred to them to deprive him of this, the only thing left to him...

Had the man said eighteen months?

Bauman continued to sit motionless. The public prosecutor stepped up to the table. The warder slipped noiselessly into the cell, carrying a chair for His Excellency. The public prosecutor sat down.

"Don't you find that it's time we got some action on the case? You can hardly be feeling comfortable in the complete isolation that surrounds you. Perhaps we are partially to blame that your case is at a standstill. Apparently my predecessor didn't speak your language. I would like to rectify that. Let's talk as man to man."

Bauman shrugged his shoulders:

"There's nothing we can talk about."

"Why use that tone?" the public prosecutor asked insinuatingly. "Why complicate still further a case that is already complicated?"

He opened his brief case, pulled out a neatly folded blue file and began turning over the pages with demonstrative deliberation. Bauman watched him.

There lay the warrant for his arrest, the warrant that had accompanied him to prison, a memorandum from the police department, the protocol of the interrogation on July 2, 1904.

"The first and the only interrogation!" the public prosecutor said, shaking his head sadly. "In fifteen months! Why do you do things like that?"

"Me?"

The public prosecutor read out the protocol:

"'. . . declined to state where he lived and when he arrived in Moscow. Refused to state whether he was guilty or not. Refused to give any evidence in general.' That is all."

"I think it's quite enough."

"Under the circumstances how do you expect us to get on with the investigations? You haven't even signed the protocol."

"I'll have no part in your investigations. My signature would make me a party to them."

"But don't you see that you're creating intolerable difficulties. You're dragging the case out with your stubbornness."

Bauman made no reply. The public prosecutor bit his lip, but then decided to continue all the same:

"Your tactics only do you harm. We know all about you, whether you choose to tell us or not: your role at the Second Party Congress, at the Congress of the League, in the Northern Bureau, and in the Moscow Committee. I can assure you that we have precise information. Consequently, evidence on your part can only help you if only in the sense that," the public prosecutor's voice grew very gentle, "I would immediately grant an application for your release on bail."

Bauman's eyebrows twitched almost imperceptibly:

"An application for my release? Who sent it in?"

The public prosecutor replied without looking at him:

"Your—wife. Nadezhda Konstantinovna."

This time Bauman could not help moving:

"Nadezhda Konstantinovna? How? She is here, in the Taganka, behind bars, and. . ."

He broke off and frowned. The public prosecutor looked up at him with an insolent, cold smile.

"You're misinformed, I fear. But I can understand that, in view of the strict isolation we were compelled to keep you in. Your wife has been released. We found it possible to release her on bail."

Bauman's eyebrows knit more closely:

"Why?"

The public prosecutor made a slight movement with his hands.

"We apparently had grounds for doing so."

"You mean to tell me," Bauman flared up, "that Mrs. Kuzmina gave evidence?"

"I mean to tell you nothing as long as you persist in being stubborn. I'm only informing you of the fact." He bent closer and spoke in a low and intimate tone of voice, "And I'm informing you of it to show that we can be *human* (though you may deny it) even to people guilty of the gravest violations of the law. Naturally a crime against the state cannot be ignored and *must* be punished by law, but in meting out punishment we try to remember that we are dealing not only with criminals but also with *human beings*. That is how we fulfil our duties. That is why we even went so far as to release your wife—although the charges against her are very grave—when we learned that there is trouble in your family. I would never have risked distressing you with information of that sort—in gaol any distress is especially painful—but your wife authorized me..."

Trouble in the family? Nadya authorized this dandy? What nonsense! Bauman shrugged his shoulders in disgust:

"Do you expect me to believe that Nadezhda Konstantinovna is free? And that she allegedly calls herself my wife?"

The public prosecutor sighed. It sounded sincere.

"Hm-m, you are really difficult to deal with. Happily I can prove what I say. You, of course, remember

your—I mean Nadezhda Konstantinovna's handwriting."

He took a neatly folded sheet of paper out of his pocket, unfolded it and showed it to Bauman from a distance. Bauman impetuously stretched out his hand. He recognized Nadya's hand. It had always been so uneven.

"Dearest Kolya.

"I am free. I am writing only about family matters as that is all they will allow me. Father is dangerously ill. He is going to have an operation and it may prove fatal. Your presence is necessary—we have all run our legs off, there is so much work that we have more than enough to do. Mother is absolutely well. Her cheek was a little swollen, but the root of the tooth is absolutely sound, so do not worry. I cannot tell you how much I am looking forward to seeing you. *Do all you can* to return to me. Love. *Nadya*"

While Bauman read the letter the public prosecutor keenly watched the expression on his face.

"You see I didn't, in the slightest, deviate from the truth. Without any exaggeration I can say that your wife, as you see, fully supports my appeal. 'Do all you can.' That must make you understand how really *necessary* your presence is in your family." He carefully took the note from Bauman's hand. "To my great regret I cannot leave this document with you. It is quite innocent, but who can vouch that there is nothing between the lines? Nadezhda Konstantinovna is not only your wife, she is also your political accomplice, and conspiratorial technique as regards writing with chemicals has become quite perfect. I'm sure I do not have to tell you that."

Bauman shrugged his shoulders indifferently.

"As you please," he said, "I already know everything I'm interested in."

The public prosecutor waited for a while, then pulled his brief case towards him:

"Well, Nikolai Ernestovich, shall we begin? We are not exacting. Just a few words and we'll dispense with the signature, since you do not recognize formalities. And then—freedom, reunion with your family. Will you permit me?"

He opened the brief case, took out a sheet of foolscap and a gold-plated travelling inkwell. Bauman picked up his book again, but his fingers trembled.

"Tomorrow. I'll let you know tomorrow, through the administration," he replied after a pause.

The public prosecutor's lips twitched. He seemed to be saying something that Bauman could not hear. He returned the sheet of foolscap to the brief case, stood up and went to the door. It opened silently before him. The warder had clearly been eavesdropping. The public prosecutor hesitated in the doorway.

"You don't deserve it, of course, but I promised your wife." From the brief case he drew out a framed reproduction of the Sistine Madonna and held it out to Bauman. "How do you like it?" he asked with a smile, noticing Bauman's surprise. "You know the law only allows us to let in divine pictures."

Bauman accepted the Madonna. On her cheek lay the violet-coloured stamp of the public prosecutor's office.

## *Chapter XXVII*

## ON THE EVE

The public prosecutor left. That same moment the warder put his eye to the peep-hole. It stared in, blinked, and disappeared.

. . . . . .

Did he want freedom? At any price?

. . . . . .

What was the idea of this picture of the Madonna?

He turned the framed cardboard over in his hands. It was thick and hard. He looked closely, then abruptly moved over to the corner made by the corridor wall. That was his "private corner" which could not be seen from the window in the door or the peep-hole. He hurriedly split the cardboard, digging his nails painfully into it. Sheets of thin white cigarette paper lay revealed. He pulled them out, throwing all caution to the winds. It was a sheaf of printed three-column leaflets:

PROLETARII

. . . . . .

Lenin! It must be from him! Otherwise they would not have sent it.

Bauman's hands shook. He had never been so agitated in his life.

From Lenin! That meant everything was all right.

The editorial: "Announcement of the Third Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party," signed by the Central Committee. Bauman instantly recognized Lenin words. They were simple and penetrated to the depths of the heart.

It meant—victory. Lenin's victory in the Party, and consequently the victory of the revolution!

The tiny printed letters danced before his eyes. Bauman's breathing became laboured. He reread the paper and could scarcely believe his eyes:

"The revolution has broken out and is spreading ever wider, embracing new localities and new strata of the population. The workers stand at the head of the militant forces of the revolution."

Bauman's eye sped over the lines. He read avidly. He was wholly engrossed in these words, every letter of which filled him with fresh courage and strength.

The peep-hole in the door moved and the warder's eye swept the empty cell. The prisoner was in the "private

corner." That was against orders. But today the warder was disregarding regulations. He closed the peep-hole and moved away as noiselessly as he had come.

. . . . . .

Bauman continued to read.

"The Third Congress was convened by the Bureau elected by the majority of the Committees working in Russia, and by the Central Committee of the Party."

So the Central Committee had been compelled to share in it, too!

"Invitations were sent out to all Committees, isolated groups, and the dissatisfied groups in the provinces, and the vast majority of these, including almost all the Committees and organizations of the minority, elected their delegates and sent them abroad to the Congress. Thus, everything that could possibly be done in the prevailing police conditions was done to convene an all-Party Congress; it was only the refusal to take part of three members of the former Party Council, living abroad, that caused the entire Party minority to boycott the Congress. The Third Congress, as the resolution below shows, charges these three members with the entire responsibility for the split in the Party."

Could these three members be Plekhanov, Martov, and Axelrod? Quite likely! It was just what one would expect of them.

"The Third Congress recognized the incorrectness of the turn to obsolete and outlived views of Economism that has been observed in our Party; but at the same time the Party created precise and definite guarantees of

the rights of every minority, these guarantees being fixed by the Party Rules, which are binding on all its members."

Further, Bauman read:

"But besides these general and basic tasks of the Social-Democratic Labour Party, the revolutionary period we are now passing through confronted it with the role of the foremost champion of freedom, the role of the vanguard in the armed uprising against the autocracy. The greater the resistance of tsarist power to the popular striving for freedom, the mightier will be the force of the revolutionary onslaught and the more the likelihood of the complete victory of democracy, with the working class at its head. The carrying out of a victorious revolution and the defence of its gains places gigantic tasks on the shoulders of the proletariat. It will contemptuously throw off everyone who predicts that victory will bring misfortune. The Russian proletariat will know how to do its duty to the end. It will know how to lead the popular armed uprising. It will not be scared by the difficult task of participating in a provisional revolutionary government, if such a task falls to its lot. It will know how to repulse all counter-revolutionary attempts, to crush relentlessly all the enemies of freedom, to defend the democratic republic with its own blood, and to attain by revolutionary means the realization of our entire minimum programme... By our victory in the impending revolution we shall have taken a gigantic step towards our socialist goal, have freed Europe from the oppressive yoke of a reactionary military power and have helped our brothers, the class-conscious workers of the world, who are weary of bourgeois reaction and who have been spiritually encouraged by the successes of the revolution in Russia, to march forward to socialism more rapidly and with greater resolution and boldness. And with the help of the socialist pro-

letariat of Europe we shall be able not only to defend the democratic republic but to march towards socialism with seven-league strides.

"Forward, comrades workers, to an organized, united, staunch struggle for freedom!

"Long live the revolution!

"Long live international revolutionary Social-Democracy!

*"CENTRAL COMMITTEE R.S.D.L.P."*

Bauman straightened his back.

When had this been written?

The dateline on the newspaper was "Geneva, May 27 (14), 1905."

May! And now? Was it September? Or October?

. . . . . .

The meaning of Nadya's note was clear as daylight to the final full stop. There had been no need for chemistry. She could be writing of only one "operation" with a possible fatal outcome—the armed uprising. That was obvious. Only an idiot could fail to guess who "father" was. "Little father," and "father" had been the most honourable titles used by petitioners in tsarist Russia for many long ages. Now they were going to make no obeisances; they were going to fight with guns in their hands! That is what the word "operation" meant.

But was he, Bauman, to be left out of the fight? Not if he could help it! Do all you can to return, Nadya had said...

"We have more than enough to do." He could imagine what was happening if the uprising was on the order of the day. They needed every available man, and even then it might not be enough. True, "mother" was already well. "Mother" was the conspiratorial name for the Moscow Committee. That meant it had recovered from the

blow inflicted by the police. "The root of the tooth"* referred to Kozuba. "Absolute-ly"—meant that Lelya, "Absolute," was free. That was wonderful, of course. Absolute was a superb worker, while Kozuba was invaluable these days; he was a Moscovite, a genuine proletarian of working-class origin; he had contacts in all the factories and was very popular among the workers. But with direct action about to begin, everyone down to the last man had to be mobilized. As Lenin said: "every man who can be used must be used." He must get out of prison, no matter what it cost!

. . . . . .

The warder looked through the peep-hole again and walked away, his mind at ease; the prisoner was sitting with an open book in his hands.

The newspaper was stuffed up his shirt. Scraps of the torn Madonna were lying in his "private corner."

No matter what it cost! But, naturally, not if that meant testifying. That was obviously not what the people "at home" had in mind when Nadya wrote the note. Anything but that.

. . . . . .

Escape? Impossible. He could not leave his cell unnoticed, to say nothing of tackling two military patrols and a dozen locks with just bare hands. To entertain such an idea was madness. His cell was on the third floor and there was no getting out of it either by the stairs or the roof.

Consequently, there was really nothing to ponder over. To do all he could meant only one thing:

Hunger strike.

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* The Russian words for "root of the tooth" are *koren zuba*.—*Tr.*

If he went on hunger strike he could force them to release him on bail.

. . . . . .

It was probably what Nadya had implied in her note because a hunger strike really meant trying "no matter what it cost," even if it meant death. It was this threat of death, and only this that made the hunger strike a strong weapon. If he did not make it crystal clear to the gaolers that he meant to stick it out to the end they would never release him. Yes, it would be a fight to the death and the hunger strike was his strongest weapon.

Bauman stood up and began to pace the cell. Three steps from the table to the door. A turn. Three steps back.

Death? Rubbish. After all he was a medical man and he knew.

If during hunger strikes people were sometimes on the verge of death it was only because of their own free will, or, to be more exact, because of their lack of will-power. Because they had no desire to live. In such cases they died in a few days; their reserve not of proteins, but of will-power had not sufficed. The *living* body, the body that is truly alive, cannot be weakened so easily. To become so weak a man's body would have to "burn up" fifty or sixty per cent of its weight, but if the man sensibly husbanded his strength, that process would take at least sixty to eighty days. He remembered all this from his student days when he had studied the laws of metabolism. He had forgotten the formula. But he firmly retained in his memory that twenty-seven to thirty calories are used up every day for each kilogram of weight. For a man of medium weight the fatal loss of weight would not begin until after two months. If he had the necessary will-power, of course.

Bauman continued to pace the cell—three steps, a turn, three steps back. And again the peep-hole opened.

. . . . . .

Two months. He knew he need not worry about dying of starvation, if only for the reason that his friends in the world outside would never allow matters to continue for so long. It was possible that they would not give him even the few days required (it was hard to predict how many) before the authorities gave in. True, he would not be the only one to go on hunger strike. As soon as the news went round the gaol his comrades would support him. That would speed things up. Last autumn the local "Taganka" Bolsheviks had gone on hunger strike; that had happened just before his transfer to the punishment cell. *Then* concessions were made on the eleventh day. *Now* the public prosecutor would have to yield earlier, if the tide of events was rising. The situation had been quiet the first time they went on hunger strike.

Bauman's mind was made up.

## *Chapter XXVIII*

## THE GENERAL STRIKE

There was a loud hum of conversation in two tiny rooms on the third floor of a house in Sredne-Tishinsky Street in the Krasnaya Presnya district. Clouds of thick smoke from home-grown tobacco hung in the air. Kozuba was standing over an open box of new, shining Browning revolvers packed in even rows, and trying to convince a thin, shock-headed worker, who was arguing heatedly:

"Try to understand that your factory isn't the only one in Moscow."

"Not the only one?" the worker cried out, taking offence. "Perhaps you don't know I'm talking about the Prokhorov Mill. Does that mean anything to you? Five hundred of our men have already signed up. Give us guns and you'll get a thousand."

"Can't you get it into your thick head that this time I've received only a hundred and fifty revolvers for all Moscow, and here you are demanding two hundred for your factory alone. I'm giving you thirty—take them and let's stop this argument."

Twenty voices supported Kozuba:

"Don't hold us up, Semyon! You should know Kozuba by this time. He sticks to what he says. Besides, your district is much better off for guns than the others. Look at the weapons the Schmidt Works detachment has! While as for us, take, for instance, the Zamoskvorechye district..."

"The Schmidt Works is one thing and we're another," the Prokhorov Mill worker retorted. "They'll be fighting all night and we're expected to go round picking up empty cases, I suppose? Let's have at least sixty, Kozuba! You're a Prokhorov man yourself and you ought to support us. How can I show up at the factory with thirty revolvers. I'll be a laughing-stock!"

"It won't be as bad as that!" Kozuba laughed, counting the revolvers, "...twenty-eight, twenty-nine, thirty. And don't, for heaven's sake, waste any more time. Every minute is precious."

The door opened and a girl hurried in. She wore a thick woollen shawl over her head and shoulders.

"Hold fast now, boys! The last railway has come to a standstill: the Finland line. So now it's a general strike on the railways! Do you see what all this is leading to?" From under her shawl she took out a pile of proclamations and threw it on the table. "From the Moscow Committee. They're fresh. The ink's not dry."

Kozuba smiled with a wink at the men:

"And I was wondering where that moustache of yours came from, Comrade Irina."

Irina wiped her face. Everyone laughed.

"Now you've got it all over you. Not the bakers, but the chimney sweeps should make you their strike delegate now. Look in the mirror. There it is, on the wall. Pretty, aren't you?"

Meanwhile the leaflets were passing from hand to hand.

"RUSSIAN SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC LABOUR PARTY

*Workers of All Countries, Unite!*

THE GENERAL STRIKE

"Comrades! The working class has risen up in struggle. Half Moscow is on strike. Soon, perhaps, the whole of Russia will be striking. The working class is striving in a mighty outburst to cast off the age-old yoke of coercion and arbitrary rule. The working class has declared war to the death on the government of thieves and bandits—the tsarist autocracy. They have also declared war on the capitalists, who are to blame for their poverty. Every man who has a proletarian heart beating in his breast must join in the struggle at this great hour. Who is not with us is against us: who remains idle today is betraying the workers' cause.

"Join the strikers to the last man. Come out into the streets to our meetings. Put forward our demands—economic concessions and political liberties: freedom of speech, freedom of the individual, freedom of assembly, freedom of organization, the right to convene a constituent assembly of the people on the basis of universal, direct and equal suffrage by secret ballot."

Kozuba grunted in approval:

"Good work, this!"

"I should say so!" Irina said, with a toss of her plaits. "If you want to know it's a rotary press job, that's what

it is! Just think how wonderful it'll be when at last we have as many machines as we want! Remember how distressing it was four years ago when I printed... All we had was a cardboard frame and a stencil pricked with a nail. Now we've got steel rollers. You should hear how the press hums. It's beautiful! And the strength of it! This job is from the Sytin Printshop, you know."

"What, have you taken Sytin's? That's going about it on a big scale!"

"Yes," Irina laughed. "Armed lads from the workers' detachments are guarding the entrance, the machines, and the telephones. The owner and the manager have been arrested. A spy somehow managed to job himself off as a worker, but he was spotted at once. In the excitement of the discovery he was almost shoved into the press."

"That wouldn't have been a bad idea," someone said with feeling.

But the others did not support him:

"You don't want a stinking mess like that about! A knock on the head and the score's settled."

Irina nodded:

"They suggested that, too. But the majority decided not to dirty their hands."

A murmur went round the room:

"You mean you let him off scot-free?"

"Not altogether," Irina said, calming them. "He was painted all over with all the colours we could lay hands on in the printshop. And to make things clear we wrote the word 'Spy' in big letters on his chest, back, and forehead."

"Good enough," Kozuba approved. "With a label like that on him it's a matter of luck whether he gets home or not; printshop paint's not easy to rub off. *Your* moustache's still there... Go to Nyura. She'll give you some kerosene to make you look pretty again. It won't do to be dirty. We've got a revolution on."

## *Chapter XXIX*

## "HE WINS WHO LOSES"

"Revolution?"

There was desperation in the harsh, angry whisper. Admiral Dubasov, the Governor-General of Moscow, was standing in the middle of his luxuriously carpeted study, hands deep in his pockets, his sinewy neck drawn into his tight, stiff white collar. The gold epaulets with the double-eagles bristled on his shoulders, which were raised angrily.

"Revolution? Do you *understand what* you're saying, superintendent?"

The hook-nosed police superintendent trembled slightly and gripped his grey, silver-edged lambskin hat still more tightly.

"Exactly, Your Excellency," he said. "If it had been only Moscow we might have called it a rebellion. But it's all over Russia, Your Excellency. The railways are at a stand-still, the telegraph is not working, not a single factory chimney is smoking. There's no light. The waterworks may be stopped before we know it. Even the chemist's shops are closed. In St. Petersburg, if you'll permit me to say so, even the Imperial Ballet is on strike. . ."

"And the Metropolitan's choristers," prompted a quiet, lisping voice.

A little old man with sparse white hair and dressed in a silk dark crimson cassock and white hood, shook his beard from the depths of an armchair. He was the only person seated; all the others—there were six or seven men in the study—had stood up as soon as Dubasov rose from behind his huge oak desk with its silver writing accessories.

"Consequently," said the admiral, shifting his gaze from the Metropolitan to the chief of police, "I take it you

cannot vouch for the safety of the city. Is that what you mean? Tell me frankly, are the police able to cope with the situation or not?"

The grey hat was by now squeezed into a ball. But the police chief replied firmly:

"No, Your Excellency. I was forced to order all the men off the streets and concentrate them at the police stations, at the disposal of the inspectors. In the streets it is unsafe for the police. Especially when they are alone on the beat. I shall make bold to report that we have already had cases of mobs disarming our men..."

"Disarming your men?" The admiral narrowed his eyes. "You mean to tell me that your men allow themselves to be disarmed, Your Excellency?"

The superintendent lowered his eyes:

"You cannot claim too much from them, Your Excellency. The pay is small. I cannot tell you how many times I have applied to the Minister. We pay them a miserly wage, we have to admit it. They are not prepared to take risks for such wages."

"What about the Motherland?" Dubasov thundered. The skin under his cropped grey hair turned purple and the veins stood out on his temples. "What about the oath of allegiance? It's the duty of every loyal subject to die if necessary. Your reasoning, superintendent, is strange for a Russian, and even more so, coming from an officer! For the time being I shall abstain from calling things by their names, but I consider it my duty to warn you..." He turned to the others. "It will not harm you to listen as well. I have a secret despatch from the Minister for the Interior. Fortunately the army telegraph is still working; the strikers have overlooked it or are not aware of its existence."

The generals exchanged glances. Dubasov went to his desk with short mincing steps, and took a telegram from the top of a pile of papers:

" 'Firmly and resolutely, without leniency or wavering, take measures to suppress the rebellion completely. . .' "

Dubasov paused. Then stressing every word, he continued:

" 'Immediately relieve of their duties all government and elected officials, who permitted themselves in any way to assist the rebellion, shelter rebels or express sympathy for them, or who betrayed any weakness. . .' " The admiral looked up quickly at the chief of police and repeated with greater emphasis:

" '. . . weakness or tolerance towards the rebels.' Have you heard?"

He folded the telegram.

"To return to Moscow affairs. The police, I take it, have, to all intents and purposes, been put out of action. Is that what you want me to report?"

The chief of police made no reply. Dubasov wheeled on his heel and faced a tall general standing beside the desk.

"And the troops?" he asked abruptly.

The general slowly raised his head:

"We can depend on the Cossacks and the cavalry, particularly the Sumsky Regiment. That's something I can't say about the infantry. In the Rostov Regiment, I can definitely say, there is unrest."

"I see," Dubasov drawled. "So the infantry are beginning to rear their heads, too. Have you taken measures?"

"Everything, everything has been done," the general said, hurriedly nodding his head. "The men are virtually confined to barracks. All leave has been cancelled and not a single rank-and-file soldier is allowed out of the gates. Double sentries have been posted. Full battle kit has been handed out to the training squads—they are reliable. The officers, all of them, are constantly with their units. I have ordered them to speak on familiar terms with the

men, even . . . to play draughts with them, in order to make themselves popular."

The admiral showed his teeth in a derisive, heavy smile:

"Well, and . . . are they playing? I hope you've explained to them that they should play 'he who loses wins' and not the usual game."

The general did not understand. His grey eyelashes flickered. But the others were clearly embarrassed. The youngest of them, in a public prosecutor's uniform with a Lyceum badge on his breast, asked, with a drawl:

"Allow me to ask for an elucidation. The telegram from the Minister for the Interior speaks of resolute measures. The same is said in the order of the day that General Trepov recently issued: 'Fire no blanks, spare no bullets.' That phrase is immortal—it will make history. All that points to playing the 'usual game,' in the phrase Your Excellency has just been pleased to use. Besides there is a hint in your words of some other strategy. You, therefore, have grounds to believe that His Imperial Majesty. . ."

Dubasov made no immediate reply. Involuntarily he raised his eyes to a full-length portrait of the tsar hanging on the wall opposite the desk.

The emperor was in the uniform of a cavalry artillery officer, and held a dress uniform lambskin hat in his hand. In the background was a palace. The portrait had been hanging in the study for a long time, but only now did Dubasov notice that somehow the tsar's knees were absurdly bent and pitiful and that his smile was embarrassed and woe-begone. And for some reason the artist had painted him standing in the middle of the street, like a police constable on duty in front of a wine shop. To top it all—his head was bare! The devil take it! Who had painted the portrait? An idiot or a rebel? He would have to have that abomination taken down.

He looked at the portrait again, staring fixedly at it. He had to admit that the resemblance was striking. The scoundrelly artist! That was why the delegates from public organizations who had come to see him three days ago had grinned when they faced that wall... Now he knew the reason for their grimaces.

Someone coughed and the admiral came back to the business on hand.

"What does His Majesty think?"

All the people here were reliable: the highest ranking officers in the city and the public prosecutor. He could and had to speak openly.

"The situation is critical," the admiral said slowly. "We must acknowledge it. There are—two possible ways out. The most desirable and reliable—is a military dictatorship."

"Dmitri Fyodorovich Trepov," the public prosecutor said in a whisper as though talking to himself.

The admiral nodded:

"Until now, as you all have seen from the telegram, we have steered a course in favour of a dictatorship. The law should have been set aside long ago. Arrests serve no purpose; one cannot try hundreds and thousands of people. We must annihilate the rebels by force of arms without delay. Give them a blood-bath their grandchildren will remember. Physical extermination: that is feasible only under a dictatorship."

He compressed his fleshy lips and fell silent for a minute.

"But a dictator must have sufficient armed strength. And they must be dependable. The whole question hangs on whether we can find them in the required numbers..."

He paused again. The silence in the study was complete. The admiral raised his hands slightly.

"To our great regret what we see in Moscow makes us doubt the existence of any strength."

The general looked away with a frown.

"In that case we cannot play a 'forcing' game. And as not a single one of us has the slightest intention of conceding to this filthy rabble that is yelling its head off about freedoms, we can only play a game of 'he who loses wins.'"

Silence reigned again in the study. The public prosecutor, who, of all those present, clearly felt most at ease in the governor-general's study, spoke again:

"Is that to be interpreted in the sense that a constitution may be proclaimed?"

Dubasov bowed his head, without answering. The public prosecutor continued:

"What if this filthy rabble, as you have been pleased to call it, makes use of the articles of the constitution? I quite understand that they are all merely for the sake of appearance. But history can point to cases when 'appearances' have been converted into realities."

The admiral gave a low, hoarse laugh:

"There is a risk in every game. But it doesn't seem great to me. To say nothing of the peasants, even the factory workers are essentially—a herd of cattle. Everything depends on the leaders. If they are eliminated... Radically eliminated, of course. I mean—physically."

"In the Holy Scriptures it says: 'I shall smite the shepherd and the sheep will disperse,'" the Metropolitan said approvingly, with a shake of his magnificent grey beard.

The public prosecutor shook his head dubiously. The admiral's eyebrows twitched:

"Do you see any difficulties, Mr. Public Prosecutor?"

The public prosecutor sighed:

"Under existing laws..."

"Laws have nothing to do with it," Dubasov broke in irritably. "We are talking about state policy. I quite understand that, officially, it may be a little inconvenient.

But couldn't it happen that ...well, to give you an example. Have you at the moment any prominent leaders in your gaols?"

"Yes, of course!" the public prosecutor readily agreed. "Members of the Central Committee of the R.S.D.L.P., Bauman, for instance. Your Excellency probably knows about him. He is one of the original old guard of the Moscow rebels. Undoubtedly a very prominent personality in the revolution."

"There you are, then. Why can't this same Bauman commit suicide one fine night?"

The public prosecutor looked anxiously at the others and replied with studied indifference:

"It couldn't possibly happen, Your Excellency! No one would believe it. By all accounts, Bauman is the most optimistic man in the world. At any rate, he is certainly the most cheerful individual in the prison."

"I'm in no mood for jokes. I think you understood what I had in mind."

Dubasov brought his hand down on the desk and the public prosecutor finally seized the opportunity to catch his eye and indicate the others; his face was a picture of anxious concern.

"You don't have to warn me! I am a soldier and I speak with the frankness of a soldier, without subterfuge. I am sure that everyone here is an honest servant of the throne and the Motherland. Why play hide and seek? The leaders must be destroyed. To me that is clear as daylight. And it is also clear as daylight that the simplest way, since we've got them in our hands, is to take advantage of the fact. Is it so difficult to find a criminal to do it? In your gaols you've got enough professional murderers to kill off an army! You can promise one of them a lighter sentence or even release; just let him into the cell one night. No one will even know of it."

"Impossible!" the public prosecutor said distinctly. "Even if we hanged the criminal immediately afterwards, the matter would become public, in one way or another. The devil only knows why, but it's a fact that everything that goes on in our prisons becomes common knowledge not only among the prisoners but throughout the city. We cannot, Your Excellency, we absolutely cannot give them such a trump card for agitation, especially at a time like this! This Bauman, you've just mentioned, has gone on hunger strike in the Taganka. For almost a year he has been in complete isolation and, even so, I cannot be sure that the gaol will not learn of it and, consequently, support him. And if hunger strikes among the political prisoners become general, the workers will learn of them. You realize what the end might be, in their present state of excitement, Your Excellency..."

The admiral listened, his eyes screwed up:

"I see. Well I can't help all that. Mr. Chief of Police, have you carried out my orders?"

"Yes," came the reply, as the chief of police hurriedly rose from an armchair. "By ten o'clock, as you ordered."

He glanced at the old-fashioned bronze clock on the mantel-shelf. The elegant hands pointed to eleven.

Dubasov rang the bell. The door opened and an aide-de-camp stepped into the room.

"Is everything ready, Konovnitsin?"

"Ready, Your Excellency."

"Where?"

Konovnitsin hesitated:

"In the basement. 'Under the vaults,' as it were. I assumed that that would be more appropriate. If you choose, I can bring them up here."

Dubasov thought it over, looking at the carpets spread on the floor and at the ill-starred portrait of Nikolai II.

"It's not worth it. We'll go down ourselves."

He pushed back his armchair and rose to his feet:

"Well, Your Excellencies... Today's conversation has made it clear, I think, to all of us, that the state machine —from the troops to the court (he gave the public prosecutor a scornful look)—refuses to make a move. There is only one thing left: to appeal to the people."

A shudder went through his listeners. Dubasov smirked, pleased with the effect his words had produced.

"Gracchus said: 'I appeal to the people.' You see, Mr. Public Prosecutor, classics are read not only in the Imperial Alexander Lyceum. I, too, have read the classics. Kindly follow me, gentlemen!"

## *Chapter XXX*

## THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE "PEOPLE"

In the vaulted cellar a strong whiff of musty dampness and the pungent odour of unwashed bodies and wet sackcloth greeted the admiral. The basement was crowded with people. To the fore stood men in peasant overcoats of good cloth and caftans girdled with belts. Behind them, crowding closely together were ragged creatures in tattered jackets and shaggy fur coats. Round the walls stood policemen in grey greatcoats.

The admiral frowned. The basement was disgusting. He had never imagined that there was such an abominable basement in his residence. It would have been more fitting to have gathered in one of the reception halls. That clown Konovnitsin and his eternal romanticism! Will it please you to receive them "under the vaults?" "Fiesco's conspiracy!" Idiot! And he had said nothing about taking a hat. Standing in the damp, with no hat on!... A week in the guard-house for Konovnitsin would teach him to behave! And just as soon as this business was over, too!

Behind him he could hear the low murmuring of his suite and the senile coughing of the Metropolitan. Evi-

dently they had still not recovered from their surprise; they could not understand what this was all about.

The admiral planted his feet wide apart as he might have done on the bridge of a rolling ship.

"Good day, Russian people," he said with stern solemnity.

The ranks replied hoarsely:

"Good day, Your Ex-cel-len-cy!"

Dubasov's lower lip protruded as he began:

"I am a soldier and I shall be brief. I wasn't trained to chatter. You've seen what's going on in Moscow? The city of the throne, forty times forty churches, the second most sacred city in the world, after Jerusalem... But now the streets are full of godless Socialists with red flags. Moscow has become the leading rebel of the empire. Can we, good Christians, tolerate it? Our Lady in Heaven is shedding tears of blood..."

He bowed his head low and blinked rapidly to show how the Virgin Mary was weeping. There was some sniffing among the crowd and the smell of stale sweat and alcohol became stronger.

"Because of them, because of the Socialists, we lost the war. And to whom! It's a disgrace even to say it! That was chastisement from God for our tolerance of the atheists! Without God there is no victory for us. God has led us, the Russian people, from time immemorial. He is our general!"

The admiral raised his head proudly, squared his drooping shoulders and everyone immediately understood how God led the Russian Imperial Army and Navy.

"We must be worthy of Him, brothers! We must save the Motherland. His Majesty is depending on you."

A broad-shouldered man in the front row, with a white apron over his caftan, drawn in by a broad leather belt, obviously a butcher, shook his oily close-cropped head and answered for the rest:

"Glad to be of service!"

Dubasov continued:

"For that reason I gave orders for you, the representatives of the people, to gather here. And, as you see, I have brought to you the entire general staff. His Eminence, also, is present... We have come to show you that the Tsar and all his loyal servants are with you and that you may rely on the protection of the Tsar. The rebels have united in unions and it is time you united as well to defend our Russian land. In the name of the Tsar I tell you, the times are disturbing; the authorities consider it too much trouble to deal with the rebels; you will have to take matters into your own hands."

He raised his hand suddenly and brought it down in a blow.

"The rebels must be thoroughly exterminated!"

"It's the leaders, that should be struck down!" cried out a voice from somewhere at the back. "The disease comes from them. If they weren't such trouble-makers—do you think the people would be revolting?"

A smile of satisfaction played round the admiral's mouth:

"Who said that? Step forward."

The ranks opened. A short man pushed his way forward. He had not shaved for many a long day, and his eyes were almost concealed by a thick growth of hair. He squeezed his cap in his sweating hands.

"Who are you? What is your name?"

"Mikhalin... Mikhalchuk!" the man said, shifting his eyes. "Policeman at the Shchapov Factory."

Dubasov drew out his pocket-book.

"That is straight thinking. Honest thinking. Thank you!"

The pocket-book was opened. Scores of eyes blinked as they watched the admiral's fingers, which were stumpy and gnarled with gout. The fingers drew out a twenty-five-ruble note.

"Take this, and remember: a prayer to God and a service to the tsar are never in vain!"

Mikhalchuk grunted with emotion:

"My humble... As God is my witness, I shall be worthy!"

There was a buzz among the crowd. The butcher threw out his chest and stepped forward:

"We shall all be worthy!"

The admiral nodded:

"I believe you, brothers! I have already ordered the office of the governor-general to reward each according to his merits. I am sure you will come to some agreement among yourseves; you will receive your instructions from the police inspectors in your districts; they have already been notified. And remember, brothers: you will be rendering a public service. Remember the tsar, and the tsar will not forget you. Like God, the tsar is always gracious. You will not be the losers. Your Eminence, bless the faithful, give them strength to perform great deeds."

Holding up the skirts of their coats, the men were already falling to their knees and crossing themselves. The Metropolitan raised his white, slender fingers in a gesture that could have been either threat or blessing:

"In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost... Be brave, my children! For the Holy Church, for the throne. For our Father in Heaven and on Earth. God's commandment says: 'Thou shalt not kill,' but just as on the field of battle where it is no sin to kill soldiers of the enemy so now it will not be sinful to kill the enemies of God and the tsar. And in the psalms a prayer is offered up to God which says: 'Victory ... to our most pious, most autocratic, great sovereign...'"

. . . . . .

"Superintendent Shtramm," Dubasov called out from the stairs leading to his chambers.

The superintendent of police overtook the admiral, taking the steps two at a time.

"The printshops are on strike," Dubasov said. "But I hope the police printshop is working. Suppose we hurriedly print an appeal on the lines of my address and the blessing of His Eminence? The police and those ... representatives ... could distribute it," he gave a sniff and stroked his moustache, "on the sly, like these illegal conspirators. Do you think you can find someone good enough with the pen to write it?"

## *Chapter XXXI*

## THE FIFTH DAY

For five days Bauman had eaten nothing.

During the November hunger strike he had held out easily for eleven days, until victory. But these five days had been harder than all the other eleven in spite of the fact that he had kept a closer watch on himself: he had drunk water and avoided moving about.

Had his organism grown weaker during the year in gaol? Or was it his nerves? Without getting up Bauman tensed his muscles; he felt them and smiled. No, everything was in order. So, it was only his nerves. He was sure of it!

When on hunger strike one had to be calm. That was perhaps the most important thing. One had to free the mind of all thought, all worry, keep the brain relaxed with some nonsensical fiction, cheap novels. He had not worried in November. But could he help it now?

This was the fifth day that the cell had not been cleaned; the warder himself came for the slop-pail; apparently they did not trust the convict who usually did the cleaning. In isolation of this kind news of a hunger

strike would not spread through the gaol, and in that case there was no chance of the people outside hearing of it.

Something seemed to be missing in his calculations.

He did not know what was happening outside... Perhaps Kozuba and Absolute and Nadya were already somewhere here, behind bars. Perhaps they were unable to get in touch with him...

. . . . . .

They had stopped giving him books. The public prosecutor had sent only one, that he had himself selected, no doubt trying to make a fool of him.

*Knut Hamsun.* Collected Works, Volume II. *Madcap, Game of Life, At the Gates of Heaven,* and... *Hunger.*

The titles seemed to have been specially chosen; particularly the last one, apparently to whet his appetite.

Naturally, he began reading *Hunger* first. Why not afford the public prosecutor some pleasure! He found it amusing, but, after a time, it began to irritate him. How dared this Knut Hamsun give a feeble picture about what he believed was hunger, when *real* hunger existed in the world, hunger that gnawed at one's vitals, held one by the throat, drove one to cannibalism, or carpeted whole regions with corpses! Or the invisible, inaudible, silent hunger of the workers' districts, which strangled children and gave an earthy tinge to young faces. Not a word about them! When he wrote his three-hundred-page novel on the cravings of a bourgeois belly did the author imagine he had chosen a good theme? How dared he call it hunger.

The slightest irritation intensified the metabolistic process and, consequently, caused a loss of calories and increased the quantity of poisonous secretions. Why get worked up about Knut Hamsun. His nerves had plenty of work as it was.

A stealthy, careful, hardly audible knock sounded on the right-hand wall, by his side. At first Bauman could not believe it. Hunger often played tricks with the ears. But the knock was repeated. It was the prearranged signal of the gaol alphabet. This time Bauman read quite clearly:

"Who?"

His name had been recorded long ago and there was no sense in withholding it. Bauman answered, rapping out the letters as carefully and softly as the person on the other side:

"Bauman."

The reply came quickly, in jerks. Bauman found it difficult to make out the letters as they came through the wall:

"Ziegler."

That was impossible! Ziegler? Transferred? Here, next to him? He must ask some question to verify if it was really Ziegler. Bauman could not immediately find the right thing to say. But he had to reply...

"Avgust?"

"Yes. I have been transferred because the gaol is congested. Many new people have been brought in. The entire Committee has been arrested. The printshop has been taken. There are ten people to every solitary confinement cell."

A long pause followed. Then Bauman knocked on the wall:

"I went on hunger strike."

The reply came instantly:

"We know. Stop it, it is not worth while. The strike has failed, nothing will come of it."

Bauman raised himself on his elbow and banged on the wall, filling the whole corridor with the noise:

"Scoundrel!"

It was not Ziegler. It was an agent-provocateur. His replies had betrayed him; friends would never have said what he had said. Lengnik, in particular, could not have said such things. And the man had responded when he was called Avgust. Lengnik had never used such a pseudonym.

Bauman stretched himself out on the bunk again. Once more a fast, staccato rapping came from the wall. But he paid no attention.

. . . . . .

The slightest irritation intensifies the metabolistic processes.

He must close his eyes and stop thinking. But how could he, when he had nothing to read or eat; food helps to distract thoughts, too. And then without food every day seemed to be endless in the loneliness of the cell. And it was so oppressive that it was unbearable. And yet, what actually was boiling water, meatless lukewarm soup, half-cooked porridge that stuck round your teeth . . . and again porridge in the evening when, because of the darkness the dim lamp always burning in the vaulted ceiling, seemed somehow brighter? Yet it was easier to pass the day when one's gloomy thoughts were interrupted by meals, meagre though they were. And now the days were very long and forced one to think and to think without interruption. Then, what was worse: to listen to oneself. The human organism was so arranged that if one began to listen in utter silence, in this devilish cell, one found oneself hearing sounds and rustlings even though the place was empty. And if one began taking notice of one's body, one would be sure to experience pain. Something would surely ache somewhere.

Bauman sat up on his bunk and swung his feet to the floor. Away with such thoughts. He must arrange his day in some other fashion. Since he had nothing to

read and no one to exchange messages with, lying would only weaken him physically. He needed movement. All the sixteen exercises. That would refresh him instantly.

. . . . . .

Just then steps sounded in the corridor. It must be dinnertime, was his thought. The little window in the door would now open and he would have to perform the seventeenth exercise, one he had not provided for: it consisted in taking the basin of soup, pouring the soup out into the slop-pail and handing back the basin; taking the plate of porridge, throwing the contents into the slop-pail, and handing back the plate.

But the window did not open; instead, the door opened. The warder carefully carried in two plates and put them on the table.

"Have something to eat, Mr. Bauman," he said, obsequiously.

Bauman put out his hand:

"Give it here."

The seventeenth exercise.

The warder shook his head sadly:

"That is all to no purpose, Mr. Bauman! You're just torturing yourself for nothing, if you'll permit me to say so."

He went to the door, hesitated, and sighed. His voice and general appearance were so unusual that Bauman asked guardedly:

"What's the matter with you? You seem somehow different today."

The warder sighed again:

"There's a lot on my mind, Mr. Bauman!"

He was silent for a moment then added:

"The trouble is I have a family."

Bauman trembled as a thought crossed his mind. He seized the warder by the shoulder:

"What's happening in the city? Tell me, quickly!"

With a frightened movement, the warder shook his shoulder free.

"There's unrest," he whispered. "A company of grenadiers has been stationed in the prison. There's talk about a workers' uprising. They'll be storming the prison. If, God forbid, that should happen, please put in a good word for me, Mr. Bauman. Everyone says you're one of their most important men. Help me... We're servants of the state not through any fault of our own. We have to eat, drink... I've never harmed you, I've done all I could to... I've got a family, that's the trouble."

Bauman shut the door. He, too, lowered his voice to a whisper:

"Help me to get out... The revolution will win—remember that. It cannot fail to win. Lead me out and it will be taken into account. We'll not remain in your debt."

The warder opened his mouth wide. He gasped for breath:

"The Lord save you! That's utterly impossible. There are special instructions concerning you. What would happen to me if you... I'd be hanged, drawn and quartered!"

"Come with me. Bring me some clothes. Have you got a spare tunic? Or some other uniform. We'll go out together. You won't be sorry, I can assure you."

"But I..." the warder began breathlessly as before and, suddenly, stopping to listen he rushed for the door. "Someone's coming!"

He slipped out into the corridor. That same second loud voices sounded near the cell. That was against all regulations and it was a long time since Bauman had heard anyone speaking so loudly. He recognized the warden's low bass. The door opened again. The warden's smile was the same as that of the warder who had just left him. It was a frightened, obsequious smile.

"You're being released, Mr. Bauman! Please come down to the office and sign a little statement: released on bail. And you'll receive your belongings. Your wife is waiting."

. . . . . .

Bauman quickly gathered up his personal things in his arms. The warden waited respectfully.

"Let's go," he said. "Will there be any witnesses in the office?"

"Witnesses? What for? I have already told you..."

Bauman smiled in his usual soft way:

"But I am not signing any 'little statements.' That's a rule of mine. You won't have a document if there are to be no witnesses."

The warden smiled, too, and shook his head:

"You're a hard man, Mr. Bauman! You're incorrigible, but we won't detain you because of a few formalities. We'll try to dispense with them."

. . . . . .

The warder ran on ahead, opening the door to the office.

"Please, come in!"

Nadya. Flowers. Warders. And someone else, a tall man in civilian clothes, amably holding out his hand. The public prosecutor? Bauman ignored the extended hand, and warmly embraced his wife:

"How are you? How is father?"

She replied, almost unable to control her laughter:

"Still breathing. Let's get out quickly. We can leave the things they've confiscated, can't we? Not to waste any time drawing up a list."

"They can draw it up without us!"

Laughing, Bauman scooped into his pocket a few of his belongings that lay on the table: braces, a penknife, a watch...

The public prosecutor again moved a step forward:

"I considered it my duty to drop in, personally, to avoid any unpleasantness..."

Nadya intercepted her husband's look. She squeezed his hand and said hurriedly:

"Come, Nikolai!"

The warder again ran ahead:

"I'll see you to the gates, so that nothing will detain you."

Bauman's lips curled. Those eyes looking at him with dog-like devotion, and the slovenly, grovelling way these people walked, disgusted him.

. . . . . .

In the prison yard the daylight blinded him and the cold fresh air made him dizzy. Bauman stopped.

"What's happened? You're so pale," Nadya asked anxiously.

"It's nothing, it'll pass. It's because I've been on hunger strike."

"You mean you've been starving?"

The question broke from her lips with a cry. The warder flinched guiltily.

A ringing voice called out from a window on the second floor of the political prisoners' wing.

"Bauman? They've released you?"

Bauman turned to look at the windows. Behind the bars were faces, and hands clung to the bars.

"Good luck, Rook!"

Bauman waved his hand and shouted at the top of his voice:

"I'll come back for you! Soon! Long Live the Revolution!"

The warder stopped. A second warder came running behind them:

"Mr. Bauman, we cannot allow..."

Waving his hand once more, Bauman walked towards the gates, followed by the notes of a song the prisoners were singing from the windows.

## *Chapter XXXII*

## FREEDOM

There must have been two or even three hundred people in the long, narrow hall. Bauman and Nadya hesitated inside the doorway and immediately a voice called out joyfully to greet them, interrupting the speaker.

"Rook, my dear chap! It's Bauman, comrades!"

Kozuba rushed up, embraced and kissed them, pricking their skin hard with his rough chin.

"I was already thinking I'd have to release you myself! But I've lost the chance now the public prosecutor's lost his nerve."

Others were already crowding round. The meeting was interrupted. Larionov firmly shook hands with Bauman. Last year they had been on hunger strike together. More and more friends came up...

"Have you come here straight from gaol? Without even going home first? You certainly do things properly!"

Bauman was very moved. He looked about him:

"What's going on here? A meeting?"

"These days meetings are attended by ten thousand people. We don't open our mouths to speak when there's less. Right now... Didn't your wife tell you where she was taking you? All we have here are the Moscow Committee and representatives from the districts."

Bauman shook his head helplessly, which made Kozuba laugh even louder:

"We've come a long way, eh? Remember our meetings at the bacteriologist's, among the guinea-pigs? Five of us made up the entire Northern Bureau. We were the only organizers over a quarter of Russia... Well, those days are over."

Bauman looked about him again.

"Do you have your sittings like this, openly?"

"Who must we hide from? These days, comrade, there are no spies, no police. The air is clean! You can walk about as you please."

The chairman rang the bell.

"Did you hear that?" Kozuba asked proudly. "Everything according to the rules! Go to the table. We'll back you for the presidium."

"Comrades! We shall now proceed with the meeting. The presidium proposes co-opting Comrade Bauman, a veteran Bolshevik, who has just been released from gaol. He is now here, among us."

The applause was loud and excited. The people at the table moved closer to make room for Bauman.

"The next item on the agenda is the distribution of functions among the members of the Committee." The chairman turned to Bauman. "What work would you like to undertake, Comrade Bauman?"

Five days of hunger had weakened Bauman. He felt a little dizzy. His nerves were taut. Before him sat rows and rows of people, and everywhere there were attentive faces he had never seen before.

"Let me look round a little first. Kozuba has just said, and quite correctly, that the work is on an altogether different footing. After an absence of a year and a half, I shall need to get used to it."

The chairman shook his head with a smile:

"I think you're being too modest, Comrade Bauman. A man like you gets his bearings right away, at the first glance. We'll bring you up to date in less than no time."

Kozuba answered for Bauman:

"No, you listen to what he says; don't overload him at once. He'll overtake and outstrip us in his own time, but, meanwhile, let him get his bearings. Incidentally, I'm leaving in the morning for the textile district near Moscow; the Proshin Mill still hasn't joined the strike. I suggest we reprove the district organizer for spending

all his time at the Morozov Mill and not showing his nose at Proshin's, although that mill is the most backward. Come with me, Comrade Rook. You know the district. You'll see what the people are like these days and we'll talk about everything on the way."

"How will you go? The railways aren't working."

"Are the railwaymen our people or not? They'll give us a locomotive. We'll get there very quickly."

## *Chapter XXXIII*

## TWO MILLS

A bear in a sarafan under a wrought-iron crown. And a latticed sign over the wide open gates:

COTTON MILL

*SERGEI PORFIRYEVICH PROSHIN*

Hereditary Honorary Citizen

There was a dense crowd in the yard. The presidium sat on the terrace of the mill. Representing the mill were an old man and two lads; the Moscow Committee—Kozuba and Bauman.

The meeting had been in progress for two hours.

On a barrel that served as the rostrum stood one of the local workers, a very tall man, still beardless, with fair eyebrows, and flaxen hair waving in the wind.

The man was brandishing his fist:

"I'm finishing, comrades! Today we're coming out against the autocracy. Up till now we've been fighting to make a few kopeks, to eke out a miserable existence, to change the stinking hole in the cowhouse they call a barrack into something more like a human dwelling. Now, comrades, we shall fight for the power that the working people need. We shall fight the tsar because we have realized that as long as he is all-powerful we have no chance against the mill owners. The tsar is the mill-

owner's mainstay, and together they are sucking the blood of the people. Once we've struck down the tsar, we'll make short work of the capitalists. Naturally that is not easy to do—we might even have to take a few beatings. But even if that should happen—it will by no means stop us. The worker will come into his own. But we've got to arm ourselves at once. You can't get at the tsar with bare hands."

"You're shoving the wrong way," someone boomed from the crowd.

"You tell us, then, what you think we ought to do," the tall chap shouted back.

The voice from the crowd lost some of its confidence and now sounded somewhat timid:

"It won't do the people any good."

The crowd stirred.

"Don't bark under the gate! If you have anything to say—climb up on the barrel! Push him to the front, lads, to the presidium."

A man with greying hair was pushed towards the barrel from the back rows; he wore a trim coat and top-boots. The tall chap looked askance at the boots. There was suspicion and mockery in his eyes.

The man took off his cap:

"Why on the barrel? I'll speak from..."

"Climb up, don't fuss about!"

The space in front of the terrace was strewn with barrels. The man climbed to the barrel next to the one on which the tall chap was standing, and, as he did so, shouts went up from the crowd:

"He's not one of us! He doesn't work here! He's from the Makeyev Workshop. There's nothing he can tell us!"

But Kozuba stood up and raised his hand. Instantly the crowd fell silent.

"That won't do, comrades! Even if he isn't one of our mill-hands, does that make him a stranger, does that

mean we shouldn't let him have his say? That's not right. Let's listen to what he has to say and then we'll decide if he's one of us or not."

The man coughed into his hand. The chairman's support seemed to give him heart.

"What I want to say is that for the good of everyone we shouldn't meddle in this fight. Is it the workers' business to shoot from a gun? Our job is to handle tools. Besides that, we've all heard the speech here about all Russia being up in arms and the railways and factories not working. Then why should we brandish our fists? They'll manage without us. Whether we join or not will make no difference; it's the workingman that has to pay in a strike..."

"And this is what I say," the tall chap interrupted, unable to restrain himself, "if the working people are in revolt for their right to live, then every man jack of us must go—that's what the times demand! And anyone who yelps against it is not a proletarian, but a toady of the tsar and a son-of-a-bitch, to put it mildly!"

"Here, here," a hundred voices roared.

The man with the greying hair gesticulated in despair.

"I-I'm not against... I only want to go carefully. I say we ought to wait..."

His voice was drowned in the uproar.

"Enough! You've had your say! Shove him into the barrel!" angry voices clamoured.

The Makeyev worker looked round at the presidium in fright. But the old man sitting beside Kozuba nodded to endorse the opinion of the crowd:

"Did you hear? Get in. The rule at our meetings is: you talk from the barrel and if you're no good, you get put in the barrel. There," he smiled "is the opening." He bent down to explain to Kozuba and Bauman. "That's to make people talk sense. At first we had windbags jumping up and getting anything off their chests and no one

knew what they were talking about. Well, the threat of the barrel stops them talking rubbish."

. . . . . .

When Bauman and Kozuba went out through the gates the meeting was still in progress. They had promised to return to Moscow for the evening meeting of the Committee. Near the St. Sergei icon several young men and an elderly weaver with a red cotton band on his sleeve, were removing the huge donation cup, chained to the foot of the icon. The coppers in it jingled.

Bauman stopped:

"What are you doing?"

"The strike committee has decided to confiscate this money and to buy arms with it," the weaver calmly replied. "Don't worry, comrade, we're doing it legally. We'll draw up a statement and sign a receipt for the amount. After the revolution the priest can collect it from the bank, if the authorities decide to return it."

"I can just see them doing it!" one of the young men said, with a laugh that showed off his strong teeth. "This money is ours, workers' money. Our own blockheads put the money here. Well, we're fining them for their stupidity."

Kozuba looked questioningly at Bauman:

"I'm not sure that this is right. There's no money here to speak of, but they can raise a terrific row about the workers stealing it. . ."

"You'll get out of breath if you go on blessing people every time they sneeze," the old weaver objected gravely. "They could call the landlord's tax robbery as well, and it's not just coppers that are collected from them."

"What tax are you talking about?"

"The tax on landlords. All round the mill there are estates. The Committee sent us out on a round of the

estates to collect money for the strike and, of course, for arms. At first we went to Count Sollogub—that's the name of an old chap we've got in the district, a millionaire. We reckoned he'd shell out, all right. And true enough, as soon as he saw us workers, sort of armed you know, he coughed up a thousand rubles. After that it was plain sailing. All we had to say was that Sollogub had given us a thousand. 'A thousand?' Well, everyone gave the same. But Countess Apraksina gave two thousand. 'If,' she says, 'Sollogub gave a thousand, I'll give two.' She wanted to outshine the old beggar, to show off."

"They think they've bought their way out," said the young man with the strong teeth and winked. "Just wait, give us time..."

The old weaver continued:

"We're taking these coppers not because we want them, but because everything's got to be done regular-like. We've got plenty of money now. If we have to strike for a month we'll strike for a month, two months—then two months it'll be. And we've got enough for arms, if we have to send a detachment to you in Moscow. I hardly think there'll be fighting here. Who's here to fight us? There was the policeman, but he took to his heels long ago. Moscow's different. There's plenty to do there."

. . . . . .

The locomotive thundered on, sending sparks into the night. Bauman and Kozuba stood near the railings on the foot-plate. The cold October wind pierced their coats, numbing them. Under their feet two headlights drilled the darkness.

"You're sure you won't catch a cold, Rook?"

Bauman did not reply at once. Thoughts were crowding his mind, after what he had seen that day. The wind made Kozuba shiver:

"The lads are unrecognizable, aren't they? D'you remember leading the strike here in 1902, and how down-

trodden the men were? Proshin had only to lift his finger... But look at them now—steering the right course. And the main thing is that they've attained everything on their own. Frankly speaking, that mill has been neglected. The textile industry is lagging behind, you know." He smiled reminiscently. "That barrel idea's not a bad one. It could be used with profit everywhere. There'd be less of the hot air! There's poison for you! You should see the way they go for each other at meetings nowadays. The Mensheviks grab at the workers' coat-tails for fear they'll go too far. The mere mention of an uprising makes the Mensheviks quake. It's a good thing you're out of gaol. You learned how to handle the Mensheviks when you were still a lad, one might say."

Bauman's reply was very grave.

"I'll be able to cope with the Mensheviks. But I've a strange feeling, Kozuba. I spent twenty-two months in solitary confinement in the Peter and Paul Fortress. When I came out I felt I had grown. It was the same after being exiled and after serving a term of imprisonment in the Lukyanovka. Each time I came out I was conscious of the fact that I knew more. But now I feel you've all progressed, you've all grown, while I—instead of being taller in stature have grown smaller."

Kozuba, too, became serious.

"The year 1905 is indeed significant. People have changed beyond recognition in only one year. But most important is the fact that the people have begun to feel their own strength. And as for this talk about not having grown yourself, you're still feeling the effects of the hunger strike. You've been working ten years for the revolution and all of us have a lot to learn from you. There's a storm brewing in Russia! Another day, another week and either they'll begin shooting us or they'll play some trick or other."

## *Chapter XXXIV*
## IN THE STREETS

"Manifesto!"*

"Freedom of assembly, association, of the individual..."

. . . . . .

Bauman almost snatched the damp sheet from the hands of the newspaper-boy. So, it had come!"

"We, by grace of God, Nikolai the Second, Emperor and Monarch...

"...have been pleased to grant our loyal subjects..."

" 'To grant!' May he be thrice damned!"

Bauman smiled involuntarily. But the smile vanished instantly; a rousing cheer reached his ears.

"Are they really believing it? Well, here's the trick we've been expecting!"

A throng of people was coming towards him down the street. In front, flourishing their hats, walked some well-dressed, well-fed individuals. They were shouting enthusiastically, but their shouts were drowned in a chorus of cheers. There were workers in the motley crowd following them and Bauman scowled at the sight of them.

. . . . . .

The meeting of the Committee had been called for noon. It was only nine o'clock. But in view of the manifesto... perhaps they had already assembled. If the manifesto was published today the Committee should have known about it last night. Bauman had been on another trip to the district and had returned late at night. Nadya, too, had been out all evening on a job.

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* The tsar's manifesto of October 17, 1905, promising the people civil liberties, was a piece of demagogy to deceive the people, a trick by the tsar in order to gain time to rally his forces and then to strike at the revolution.—*Ed.*

The Committee held its meetings in the Technical School, in Nemetskaya Street. It was a long way off. Bauman walked rapidly on.

More and more people appeared in the streets. Hurriedly hoisted tri-colour "national" flags fluttered from the walls of some of the houses.

Orators standing on mounting blocks or clinging to lamp-posts were loudly addressing the crowds at street-corners. Everywhere Bauman heard the same cry:

"Freedom! Freedom!"

The number of workers among the shouting crowds increased steadily. Bauman frowned heavily.

The workers were attentively listening, and cheering. Would the tsar really succeed in defeating the strike?

He remembered all the meetings he had attended during the seven days that had elapsed since his release. He remembered the stormy enthusiasm of the speeches, the tens of thousands of hands raised unanimously when the vote was taken.

Long live the strike!

Till victory is won!

He could not believe that there might be a retreat.

. . . . . .

He walked faster and still faster.

Most likely the Mensheviks were already sounding the retreat, servilely trumpeting the victory in the wake of the liberals.

"Freedom of association"—what need had they now for a party? "Freedom of the press"—what need was there now for the illegal printing press! The State Duma was their hope!

. . . . . .

Could he guarantee that they would not succeed in leading the masses of the workers astray, in lulling them with some outward show of victory? Victory!—here it

was printed on paper in black and white. It was being shouted out at every street-corner.

But if the workers believed all this, the autocracy would have dodged the blow.

That must never be!

Bauman turned a corner, keeping back the ardent words he wanted so much to say, words that must be said, in the Committee, and only then carried out to the square, to the people, to the mills, factories and shops, before the factory machines again began working slavishly. He turned the corner and stopped. Along the entire street, from the Technical School and further, as far as the eye could see, people were forming into ranks. Among the black workingmen's caps and battered out-of-season winter hats there were the blue cap-bands of the students.

And immediately, as though blown away by the wind, his despondency vanished.

## *Chapter XXXV*

## FRIENDS

The steps at the entrance were blocked with people, making it impossible to ascend them, but Bauman was immediately recognized.

"Comrades, make way for a member of the Moscow Committee!"

Shoulders pressed more closely to make room. Friendly eyes followed Bauman as he went up into the hall. He must speak without delay. He had to say everything that was on his mind, that he had felt on his way here. With fresh, redoubled strength he would cry out: "Long live the strike!"

. . . . . .

But hardly had he entered than loud cheers shook the hall and were echoed by thousands of voices on the steps and in the street:

"Long live the strike!"

There was Kozuba, standing on the table, his mighty shoulders towering above the close-packed delegates.

"The autocracy has retreated, comrades! It is trying to use this scrap of paper to tear itself out of the grip the proletarian general strike holds it in." He flourished the tsar's manifesto, crushed it and tossed it away. "There will be fish enough to rise to this dead bait! The priests are no doubt already announcing the glad tidings everywhere, from the Metropolitan's court to the Menshevik back-yards!"

"Quite right!"

"But the revolutionary workers, the Social-Democrats, will not let themselves be deceived. We have fought our way to freedom and we shall not go back into the cage, even if it is gilded by the dirty hand of the hangman!"

. . . . . .

The serried ranks outside, standing shoulder to shoulder, responded with a tempestuous roar like the crash of breakers on the seashore, with the vast ocean behind them. Willing hands unfurled a heavy red velvet banner by the table on which Kozuba stood. He lifted the edge of the banner, and revealed the fighting watchwords, shining forth in bold letters of gold:

*Workers of All Countries, Unite!*

Bauman saw the eyes of the men grow serious, their brows contract, then with renewed strength came the resounding, rolling cry:

"To arms!"

"Long live the strike! Long live the uprising!"

"To the streets!"

The ranks began to move.

Bauman raised his arm and shouted:

"To the gaols! Release the political prisoners!"

Kozuba recognized his voice:

"Comrades! There will be no freedom as long as tsarism lives. And it may live on, for a long time yet, if we loosen the stranglehold we now have on it. We've got to tighten our grip! Let our first step be what Comrade Bauman proposes. Let us break the locks of the tsarist prisons! Bauman, lead the column. It is your right to have that honour!"

He jumped off the table. The banner-bearer followed him as he went to join Bauman.

A militant, invocative revolutionary song already thundered forth in the street as they went out. A little behind Bauman, marched a thin youth, holding the cord and tassel of the banner. He was singing in a quavering falsetto. The words of the lad's song were unfamiliar.

"What are you singing?" asked Bauman, turning round to him.

For a second white teeth flashed behind the pale lips:

"Something of my own."

## *Chapter XXXVI*

## UNDER THE BANNER

Kozuba caught up with Bauman when the column was already approaching Voznesenskaya Street. He turned to look behind him with the eye of a commander at the endless ranks, at the flying banners. He rested his arm affectionately on Bauman's shoulder.

"You see, you were right to keep cheerful all your life —Rook, herald of spring! Spring is turning into summer. We sowed our seeds and now look at the shoots! See the banners waving. It's all your doing. A thousand enemy hands cannot stop it now."

To the right was a side turning. A group of workers stood near the gates of a factory.

Bauman slowed down, surveying the building:

"What's that factory?"

"There are two here," Kozuba replied. "Düfurmantel's and Shchapov's."

Bauman waved to the workers standing in the distance:

"Come and join us!"

Not one of them moved. Bauman frowned and then stepped on to the pavement:

"I'll go and fetch them along."

"No, don't," said Kozuba, making a move to stop him. "There are not many of them, anyway. It's not worth it. Let's go on!"

But Bauman shook his head stubbornly:

"Now I've called to them I must finish the job. You go on, I'll be back with you in a minute . . . on that racer." He nodded towards a light carriage standing at the corner. "We'll catch up with them, won't we, Grandpa?"

The old driver up on the box, picked up the reins and urged on his horse. Bauman stood on the running board.

"The banner, Comrade Bauman, take the banner!" A tall clean-shaven man, with a luxuriant growth of hair, and wearing a soft hat, held out a banner. Bauman gripped the staff, the driver flapped the reins, and the horse moved off, gathering speed.

A woman's voice called to Kozuba in alarm:

"Kozuba! Where's he going?"

Nadya, walking next to Irina, came level with the side turning. Bauman was already far down the street. The crimson banner was fluttering in the sharp, cold wind.

Kozuba answered with a smile:

"He's decided to rally all Moscow to our banner. He's gone for those chaps down the street."

He nodded in the direction of the group of people near the factory, and the smile faded from his face.

A short man was dragging something long and heavy that clattered on the ground; he had moved out from behind the group near the gates and was making for the carriage. Was it a pole, or a piece of piping? Bauman was standing and looking back at the cross-roads where row upon row of workers were marching in one long column.

The short man moved faster. The clatter of the iron against the ground grew clearer. Kozuba shuddered, and shouted with all his might:

"Rook! Watch out! It's Mikhalchuk!"

Bauman heard him. He looked round, holding the fluttering banner away from his face. But the man was already level with the carriage; he had gripped the piping with both hands and swung it over his head. The old driver shrieked, leapt down from his box, and sat on the pavement, his face covered with his arm. The banner in Bauman's hand wavered and fell to the ground.

Kozuba ran forward, shooting as he went. Behind him the singing stopped abruptly. A woman screamed desperately:

"This way. Help, comrades!"

"The people round the gates scattered in different directions. After them ran the short man, zigzagging to escape the bullets. It was Mikhalchuk, unshaven and unkempt as was his wont.

. . . .

Kozuba bent over the body. Bauman's eyes were closed. A little blood trickled from a deep wound over his left eyebrow. His chest was still. He was no longer breathing.

The street had already filled with people. Kozuba picked up the banner. The bold gilt letters of the slogan,

before which death is powerless, flashed before the eyes of hundreds of workers.

The Moscow workers replied to the heinous crime with a call for a general strike, with a storm of meetings, mighty demonstrations, and collections of money to arm the military detachments.

The battle-cry of the Bolsheviks: "Down with the autocracy," reverberated throughout Moscow.

"Revenge, comrades! It is high time to clear the dirt and vermin out of Russian land and rid her of disgrace; it is high time we took up arms and struck the decisive blow."

"Prepare for an armed uprising!"

For two days, groups of excited, angry workers, students, teachers and doctors, went in an endless stream to the Technical School from all parts of Moscow. Tens of thousands passed through its assembly hall where stood the coffin of Bauman. Every mourner saluted the revolutionary. On a table nearby the pile of contributions grew into a mound.

The interment took place on the third day, October 20; it was organized by the Moscow Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party.

Never since the day the city was founded had there been a mightier demonstration in Moscow. Bauman had, indeed, gathered all working Moscow under the Bolshevik banner. That day the whole city was out in the streets. Every plant, factory, and workshop was represented in the columns that followed the red bier.

The route to the Vagankovskoye Cemetery lay from the Lefortovo along Pokrovskaya, Yelokhovskaya, and Novo-Basmannaya streets, across Krasniye Vorota, down Myasnitskaya Street, through the heart of the city, past Moscow University, and along Bolshaya Nikitskaya Street.

The column was headed by armed workers' detachments and the Moscow Committee of the R.S.D.L.P. Then followed an endless stream of people, banners and wreaths. When the van of the funeral procession was approaching Moscow University, other groups of demonstrators were still joining the column near Krasniye Vorota.

The tsarist authorities hastily withdrew the troops and police along the entire route. Members of the Black Hundreds did not dare to show themselves. And the townsfolk crowding the pavements whispered among themselves:

"See how many of them! The procession has been passing for six hours and the end is still not in sight. I never dreamed that there were so many workers..."

"That's power for you!"

In Teatralnaya Square the procession was met by delegations carrying wreaths from various organizations. Among them were workers' delegations from other towns.

Suddenly, to the accompaniment of cheers, a group of army sappers joined the head of the column.

And as more and more people joined the procession the funeral march gave way to revolutionary songs and the feeling that the might of the organized proletariat was invincible became stronger.

On that day of mourning, proletarian Moscow, marching under red banners, demonstrated its victorious strength.

. . . . . .

The calm, firm outlines of Bauman's face were seen for the last time in the smoky light of torches under the birch trees in the cemetery.

"His services have been great, but we shall not speak of them. Let us keep in our hearts the bright memory of a hero... Let us be courageous, fearless, and devoted fighters for the cause of the people, as Bauman was!"

The torches threw a purple light on the wreathes, the ribbons, the lowered banners, and the faces of the people. There was silence under the birch trees. There was silence throughout Moscow. The city was silent with the heavy stillness that precedes a battle.

The tide of revolution was rising in Russia.

*Printed in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics*